A SOCIETY NOVEL

By

OLIVE LOGAN

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THEY MET BY CHANCE:

A Society Novel.

BY

OLIVE LOGAN,

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THEY MET BY CHANCE.

CHAPTER I.

A STRANGE GIRL'S LETTER.

PHILADELPHIA, June 15, 187-.

DEAR OLD FAY:—Are you going out of town this summer? Of course you are. As for me I'm frantic to go. Those indispensable appurtenances of every well-regulated girl's household, papa and mamma, don't see the necessity, of course—think we'll be much more comfortable at home. I HATE COMFORT! Comfort is all they think of in this bed-quilt-y old city. I've been sweltered in it up to my ears the whole winter. When the snow lay thick upon the ground and

my blood tingled through my veins and I wanted to run out in the front yard and snowball folks, mother and father have ordered more coal on the fire, had Thingumbob's patent Thingumies nailed to the windows, and turned the house into a *paté de foie gras* stewing oven. Then they looked blandly at each other, and said, "La, ain't it *comfortable!*" I hate it, Fay. If I had my way I'd prance out on the plains, hobnob with Indians, lasso the bison, dance the German with Brigham Young! Now it's hot weather, and stay at home longer I will not. I'm going to Long Branch, if I have to go as a flower-girl in a scarlet flannel sack and an idiotic grin, and peddle *boutonnières* at ten cents the buttonhole full.

Major Cheraw was over here Thursday and dined with us. We gave him one of those comfortable dinners for which we are noted, and which must have made him feel like sending us tracts by Brillat Savarin, culinary heathens that we are. Fancy Dougherty (our mature maid-servant, who waits at table and joins in the current conversation with the utmost coolness, and expresses her opinion on ourselves and our guests with a critical frankness we never dare to imitate concerning her doings), fancy this good, middle-aged soul, I say, serving that elegant but elderly *militaire* with a great cup of steaming tea with his soup, just as we have it *en famille*, because it is *so* comfortable! Cheraw put his eye-glass up and examined the

jorum of tea as if it were some curious decoction in use among us Esquimaux, and of which he must take especial note, so as to mention it in his Government report. Dougherty immediately opened fire (to use one of the major's own phrases) upon him.

"Faith," says she, turning to look at him while she held the bread-plate under my nose, "that's a raal good cup of tay. It's none o' thim weak shlops ye git in New York. It's meself made it good and shtrong: I putt in a spoonful for each of yees and *two* for the pot. Yis, I did, ma'am," she went on, nodding her head at my mother as if she expected a rebuke then and there for such New Yorkish extravagance, "I says to meself, says I, I'll give the ould felley a good sthrong cup o' tay for wanst in his life."

Fancy it! No one dared answer Dougherty. The only thing to do was that which my learned parent did—clear his throat with a great hem! wider than that on my new book-muslin skirt, and say, "Maj-jah Cher-aw!" exactly in the way he does when he ejaculates "Gental-menn of the Ju-ree!" Of course Cheraw, who has *savoir faire*, *savoir dire*, *savoir vivre* and every other *savoir* under the sun at the finger-tips of his one remaining hand, met pa more than half-way, and so Dougherty's Beotian ignorance was glossed over. When I proposed discharging her the next day, such an outcry as was raised! We've had

her sixteen years, and she's so comfortable! We tried a man waiter at table for a while, but he came in smelling of liquor every day, and was altogether too uncomfortable to be endured.

Oh,—how is that dear fellow, Stuart Phelps? Don't blush, *m'amie.* Major Cheraw told us—you are engaged. Well, trot him out with you at the Branch—for of course you're going. Cornelia Cornwallis is—and by the way, Fay, of course you mustn't think that we—the Parsons family—are good representatives of the *monde élégant* of Philadelphia. The Cornwallises are that, you know. You'd never get a cup of tea at dinner in their house—no, not if you were dying for it, I was going to say; but Chambertin at eight dollars a bottle circulates with a perfect looseness, and they use Johannisberger in their finger-bowls. They are rich, awfully rich, and we are—*comfortable;* but we shan't be much longer, that I'm determined, for go to Long Branch I will.

It seems strange, Fay, that you should marry Stuart Phelps—a good, dear fellow, true enough, but one you've known ever since you were so high! Perhaps you feel all the better satisfied with him on this account, but that's too comfortable a proceeding for my fancy. I like something strange, wild, unexpected, adventuresome, thrilling, in my choice. No long acquaintanceship for me. I want a romantic duck, who, in after years, when we are poetically uncomfortable on a small

income, shall be able to look in my eyes and sing —flat, as most men do—

> We met by chance,
> We me-ha-et by cha-ah-ance,
> We met by chance, the usual way.

and so—until we meet at the sea-side,

I remain your loving friend,

PONY PARSONS.

CHAPTER II.

THE FLIGHT OF SUMMER BIRDS.

THE summer sun is at its hottest, pouring down prostration on the fanning, panting, perspiring, linen-clad, umbrella-shaded crowd of Broadway. The newspapers of the morning contain a long list of names of patients who yesterday were sunstruck, and some of whom are to-day dead or dying or slowly convalescing, in that building there to the left as you descend Broadway, and which bears a great sign with this legend: "Hospital for the Reception of Sunstruck Patients."

To avoid the possibility of figuring in this list to-morrow, we are leaving Broadway and the heat for the agreeable purpose of journeying with

a handsome woman to Long Branch and to the cool breezes of the sea.

Having paid the hackman at the dock for the mere transportation of herself a distance of two miles to the boat's landing, a sum which would have sufficed for a day's pleasuring in a neat cab in an European city, Mrs. Duncan makes her way to a comfortable seat shaded by awnings from the sun and protected from too strong a breeze, on the upper deck of the Long Branch boat. She needs no direction from the boat's servants as to where she shall bestow herself; she knows her way about perfectly; and from the manner in which she deliberately selects the cosiest corner—while other people are rushing about, wondering on which side the sun will be, whether here the wind may not blow too strongly, and giving way to other doubts and fears—it is evident that travel on the Long Branch boats is no new experience to Mrs. Duncan.

Having seated herself comfortably, we may comfortably scan her while the big boat puffs off on its outward trip, laden with fair freight, pleasure-bound. She looks young, *is* young; but how young? Ah, that is a difficult question; and not a very vital one; for whatever her age, scarce any one who looked upon her but would acknowledge her a fascinating creature. It is not the extreme richness and elegance of her costume, though that is a positive aid undoubtedly to her attractions,

which is the cause of this; her deeply blue eyes, her complexion of marble whiteness, her pinky cheeks, her soft dark-brown hair, these seen anywhere, under any circumstances, would stamp their possessor as a beautiful woman. Her dress is a rich robe of black silk, cut in the extreme of the prevailing fashion; and every detail of her belongings, the tiny umbrella in her hand, the dainty traveling bag at her side, the Cashmere shawl thrown carelessly across her arm, bespeaks her a person as little accustomed to restraint in expenditure, as if she were an English Duchess with a rent-roll in acres.

Among the passengers this afternoon was one who had elbowed his way through the crowd that thronged the upper deck as the boat sped on, bearing in his left hand a somewhat shabby black satchel, and holding aloft in his right a camp-stool which he finally planted on a corner of Mrs. Duncan's dress. The lady quietly removed it.

"Oh, excuse *me*," said the offender, rearranging his camp-stool. Mrs. Duncan acknowledged the apology by a slight bend of her shapely neck.

He was a tall, lank man in a suit of finest broadcloth, with a diamond an empress might envy, stuck in the front of a shirt which had said *au revoir* to a laundress fully a week ago; with a soft black hat set low on his wrinkled forehead, and two saffron beds—dried rivulets of tobacco-juice—running from the corners of his hard mouth to

their outlet in the wiry recesses of his stiff "goatee" beard. Mr. Wiggins was a Western man, still young—not more than forty—who had passed through many phases of existence. He began life as an errand boy in a Cincinnati grocery store, at a salary of half a dollar a week. Perhaps he was fourteen then. In the twenty-odd years since that time he had been salesman in a dry-goods store, book-keeper, dry-goods merchant, lumber dealer—had failed for a large sum, an experience twice repeated—by turns penniless and flushed with spoil, but active, energetic, sharp, ignorant, and successful at last. At present he is one of the leading citizens of Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Having placed himself again upon his camp-stool, he proceeds to stare with special fixedness at a lady in his vicinity, and to say to himself, "That Eyetalian woman is a stunner."

Regarding Mr. Wiggins with a meditative air, was a young man with a crape about his hat, and garments of so gay a color and so pronounced a cut, that they seemed to give the lie to the suggestion of mourning put forth by the weed. He stood leaning carelessly against the guards, with a toothpick held between his lips, and which occasionally moved about without the aid of his hands.

The family group beyond—father, mother, four or five children, and a couple of servants—bear a name whose very sound is a synonym for New York city lots; which, purchased by some thrifty

grandparent, a half century ago—the price of each being no more than a bundle of wormy furs perhaps—now pour into these descendants' laps an income greater than that enjoyed as private fortune by any one of the crowned heads of Europe.

That girl, with eyes black as midnight, soft as sunset, liquid as a dewdrop, is from the South; less than a week ago she was married to the tall, graceful, handsome man at her side—her playfellow from infancy. Near her, chatting somewhat noisily in French to a group of men elaborate of toilet, swarthy of complexion, and for the most part of marked rotundity of figure, is a dark woman of questionable elegance, shrugging her shoulders, laughing loudly, telling some stories about the insane follies an English *milor* had committed for her sake—though, *ma foi*, he was not half so *bête* as the Russian prince—this is the last new prima donna from Europe, surrounded by fellow-artists, the basso, the tenor, the baritone of her troupe. Upon her the eyes of the exaggerated young man with the weed on his hat, are bent from time to time as if in special interest; the toothpick revolving more rapidly than ever under the influence of his emotions.

Mrs. Duncan, too, is attracted by this noisy group, which is close by her, and whose conversation appears to amuse her. Of the great crowd outside of them—the vulgar women with cheap clothing, the children munching sweets or fruit of one kind

or another, the men talking of railway stocks, the price of gold, sugar, the cotton crop, and occasionally of the latest performances of Continental statesmen, whose names they outrageously mispronounce—she takes no more heed than of the fly which but now alighted upon her cheek. It came near her; she was cognizant of it and she brushed it away; and being away she thinks of it no more. Upon a camp-stool beside her (for in spite of the crowd she had managed to reserve an extra stool—people came and looked at it, encountered a cool glance from her steady blue eyes, and supposing the seat to be engaged for some absent husband or lady friend, moved away), the lady had placed her bag, her shawl, the newest magazines, and two or three of the evening papers which a newsboy had pressed upon her as the boat was starting. After scanning the shipping and the shore for a while as the boat moved on, she turned over the pages of a magazine, glancing hastily at the illustrations, then opened a newspaper, and shuddering at the new list of sunstruck victims, laid that down also. After bestowing a half-contemptuous smile on the prima donna, who was now serving up no less a person than an Emperor among the list of her love-slain, Mrs. Duncan drew from her pocket a letter which bore marks of having been rudely handled on some previous occasion, as, before reading it, she was obliged to smooth out its many wrinkles across her knee. That done, she read it—slowly, carefully,

re-read it—an anxious shade flitting across her fair face as she reached a certain point on both occasions. Then, after a pause, with a deep sigh, she returned it to her pocket. For a moment she gazed fixedly out across the waters as if they, too, were a written page and she were reading it; then her fingers contracted nervously as if the empty hands were grasping some object they meant to rend, and in the triumph of this pantomime her lips were wreathed with a smile of disdain which arrested the attention of the opera singer, who stopped suddenly in her story—wondering if that contemptuous expression had been evoked by the extremely entertaining episode of professional life which she was relating to her admiring *camarades*.

The boat touched shore. Discourse was now at an end. There was the usual well-bred rush with which the Long-Branch-going world departs from its steamboat and scrambles for its train. Every man for himself. The cars were loaded down—crowded. And this provoked an animated discussion among the passengers, in which the petulant query was heard: "Is not every ticket purchaser entitled to a seat?" Conundrum for railroads.

But to stand is no great hardship, though it be an injustice—for the trip is short. Here are our passengers arrived at their destination. This is Long Branch. It looks scarcely like a habitable place—more like a scene at the theatre; flags are flying from flimsy housetops; long, white, bare wooden

hotels face the long, bare yellow sands; beyond them the wide blue sea is rolling up in thunderous waves which dash into foamy spray against the year-by-year receding beach. Bands are playing light operatic airs in showily painted pagodas on smooth croquet lawns; scores of carriages waiting for the weary, heat-ridden toilers from town, almost all driven by ladies, some by children, are drawn up in confused array at the depot; 'busses from hotels, whither you are invited by discordant roaring of stentorian voices; colored porters so ready to seize whatever portable luggage you may have with you that you are half inclined to resent their action, mistaking it for high-handed robbery; and from out this hurly-burly a woman emerges and lightly touches Mrs. Duncan's arm.

A woman whose appearance contrasted sharply with that of the lady she thus familiarly accosted; a woman whom gallantry itself would never have announced as younger than forty; with thin, brown locks, sprinkled with gray, drawn down tightly over her brow, combed behind her ears and bound across the head with three narrow bands of rusty black-velvet ribbon, in a style sometimes seen in portraits of our grandmothers in their youth, or in those of our maiden aunts who wore scratches thus ornamented; deeply pitted with the small-pox, wearing spectacles over half-shut eyes, her dress plain, substantial, dark, utterly unpretentious—it would have been difficult to guess whether this

woman was a rich, eccentric, powerful relation of the handsome woman whom she accosted, or—her servant.

"I have a carriage here for you, Mrs. Duncan," said the plain woman.

"Oh, have you, Marcia?" said the lady, and followed her lead.

Seated in the carriage, they were driven rapidly along the ocean-bordered road. Descending presently at the door of one of the principal hotels, Mrs. Duncan proved herself no more a stranger here than on the boat; for gliding quickly along the roomy corridors, she entered without ceremony a handsome chamber from whose windows was to be seen a superb stretch of sea-view.

Marcia followed her and was at her side in time to receive the hat and gloves Mrs. Duncan was on the point of impatiently throwing down. That done, she stooped to the floor and began to unbutton the lady's boots—forcing us at once to the conclusion that she was the lady's servant. Rich and powerful relations, however eccentric, are not wont to perform such menial offices as this.

"I did not know how tired I was," said Mrs. Duncan, sinking wearily upon a lounge.

"You're always tired when you go to the city," said Marcia, softly drawing slippers on Mrs. Duncan's shapely feet; "I suppose it is running about those noisy streets in the heat that tires you so."

"Yes, I suppose so;" but in saying this, Mrs.

Duncan sighed as one sighs who is enduring more mental suffering than physical fatigue.

"Try to have a nap. You don't care for dinner?"

"No. I dined in town. I'll try to sleep; and I'll have a cup of tea when I awake."

Marcia closed the small folding shutters on the inside of the windows, and the lady on the lounge closed the dark-fringed shutters of her deep-blue eyes. For more than an hour both women were motionless; hardly a sound was heard in the stillness of this room, situated in a frequented corridor of a Long Branch hotel; but at length when the low, regular, long-drawn breathing of a sleeper broke the spell, then the waking woman, Marcia—never so wide awake as when Mrs. Duncan was fast asleep—approached the prostrate form, and, with a touch so light that it might have awakened the admiration of the most accomplished pick-pocket, had he seen it, she possessed herself of the letter Mrs. Duncan had read and re-read on the outward-bound boat; then kneeling by a chink in the shutter where a gleam of light entered, the near-sighted woman removed her spectacles, and with glowing eyes and bated breath, she mastered its contents.

CHAPTER III.

A SATURDAY NIGHT'S MAZE.

WHILE death-like stillness reigned in this darkened room, and Mrs. Duncan's secret—to guard which was her special care—was being devoured from the crumpled page of the letter by the one utterly implacable foe the sleeping woman had, and in the person of the last creature on earth she suspected of enmity, scenes far more joyous were being enacted in other parts of the great barnlike house. It was Saturday; that is to say, the day when the city disgorges into contiguous summer haunts by stream and hill, ocean and woodland, all that portion of its population whose fortune, great or small, will allow them to escape from the city's dull heat, its suspended animation, for a day. That the whole city was not depopulated over Sunday seemed only a question of money. Why should any one stay? Half the churches were closed—fashionable ministers setting the example of going out of town. The theatres—bah! Theatres in midsummer! the very leavings of the artistic table of the whole year. Painted, dyed,

bepadded, young-old women dancing clog jigs and singing with shrill, cracked voices, inane topical songs to monotonous tunes imported from European beer-halls. No, theatres with their summer burlesques are not powerful enough to keep free agents away from the music of dashing waves, the odors of piney woods, the breezes of mountain-tops, the ripple of trout-bearing streams—and the Saturday-night hop ! For in spite of the heat, be sure that on Saturday night, summer after summer for uncounted years, youth will tread a joyous measure in the arms of youth, to tuneful numbers amid rural scenes.

The flutter among young people had not been greater at any time during the season than on this particular Saturday night. The heat had not before been during the summer quite so intense, and a great crowd was expected ; a greater came. All was bustle for the evening festivities. Hairdressers were rushing to and fro along the corridors, trying to keep the hours they had fixed for appointments in the different rooms with ladies young and old, impatient to be adorned. Maid-servants returning from the laundry with freshly done-up muslins were holding the snowy and beruffled daintinesses high in air, to prevent their trailing over uncarpeted halls. Florists' boys knocked at doors and delivered new-blown roses for new-blown and faded Beauty's hair ; and tardy belles fretted and scolded alike hairdressers, flor-

ists' boys, and maid-servants from the laundry, as the scraping of cat-gut and the rattling of piano keys announced the hop begun.

In a room not far from that occupied by Mrs. Duncan, a young girl stood near an elderly lady who was pinning into the girl's loose light hair a tiny moss rose-bud whose twin was fastened at her throat amid folds of lace. Her dress was of the finest, most vaporous white muslin, trimmed with the rich lace which formed a thick but soft ruff about her firm white throat. The glow of health on her cheek was painted in as delicate a hue as that on the rose's petals; and from under the golden hair which had scarcely darkened a tinge since her babyhood, large brown eyes from which truth gleamed in every ray, looked fondly in the eyes which gazed at her so proudly.

"There won't be any one there prettier than you, Fay—no, nor half so pretty," said the elder lady, admiringly.

"If every one were of my dear mother's opinion," answered the girl, playfully pinching her mother's cheek with soft thumb and finger, gloved in softest kid.

"Did Stuart say he'd come here for you?"

"There he is now, mamma. That's his knock, I know it."

The elder lady opened the door, and a young man dressed in evening costume, dainty linen gloves of tender lavender, and with a moss rose

bud stuck in a buttonhole of his coat, bowed with mock gravity, making a shield of his hat.

"Is Miss Fay Underhill within?" asked he, pompously.

"No, she's without," said Fay, passing him and standing in the corridor, "and anxious to be taken downstairs."

"Oh, wait a minute, Fay," cried the young man, quite forgetting his assumed gravity. "Come in again. I want to look at you."

She laughingly allowed him to draw her into the room, and turned herself round and round that he might inspect her toilet from all points of view.

"Perfectly lovely!" he ejaculated. "I never saw you look half so sweet. Mrs. Underhill, doesn't she look pretty?"

"Mustn't spoil her, Stuart," said Mrs. Underhill, who had herself devoted the past fifteen years to that occupation—happily without effect.

While Stuart Phelps was talking in a low tone of voice to Fay, Mrs. Underhill stepped into an inner room to get her gloves and fan.

"Now I'm ready," she said, returning.

"Don't you want this gas turned down, Mrs. Underhill?" Receiving an affirmative answer, Stuart turned it completely off. Mrs. Underhill was in the corridor. He and Fay were alone. It was dark. Not so dark but that Fay was visible, a gleaming white figure; not so dark but that he

found those soft lips, pink and dewy as the moss rose-buds they both wore, and pressed his own against them with tender force, noiselessly, but with thrilling sweetness.

"Are you coming?" cried Mrs. Underhill.

"I didn't intend to turn it quite off," said Stuart, coming up beside her and walking between the two ladies.

"I don't believe you," whispered Fay in his ear.

These two were engaged to be married. Fay was eighteen, and Stuart was seven years older. They had known each other for many years, played together, quarreled, made friends again; then as they grew, he into his strong manhood, she into beauteous womanhood, each had felt, "This is the one I love—this is the one I wish to marry," and had said so, unhesitatingly. So far as human foresight was to be relied upon, no happier, no more suitable match could be devised. Stuart Phelps was a young man of irreproachable habits and character, was rapidly earning a fortune in honorable mercantile life, and loved Fay—oh, love her! He often said he loved the ground she walked on. He had been known to catch at her dress, as she was passing, and kiss its senseless hem. He carried her photograph in the back of his watch, and heroically refused to take it out, though the watchmaker told him it was injuring the works. And Fay—well, Fay said if she didn't marry

Stuart, she'd die an old maid and then they'd be sorry. There was not the slightest likelihood of her dying an old maid, or of their being sorry; for there was no reason why Mr. and Mrs. Underhill should object to the match, nor did they do so.

They found a great crowd on the lower floor when they descended. It was as much as they could do to get a peep in at the door where the dancing was going on, and when Fay managed to get a glimpse she turned to Stuart and said, half laughing, half pouting,

"I declare it is too absurd! Every night it's like this. Those noisy, forward children get possession of the floor and no one can dance for them."

"I can't understand how any mother can allow her children to behave as those children are permitted to do," said Mrs. Underhill, severely.

"It is the most extraordinary and unpleasant exhibition I ever saw," said an English lady standing near. She had been in the house some weeks, and the Underhills had formed acquaintance with her. Her husband and herself were registered on the hotel books as Mr. and Mrs. Laidless, but they were a titled couple—earl and countess—who had recently arrived in America. Their children—two modest little girls, and an exceedingly gentlemanly boy of about fourteen—were never seen after their early tea. During the daytime they kept near their mother, and were always dressed with the

utmost plainness, wearing stout boots, wide-brimmed hats, and clothing cut in childish fashion, without the slightest effort to imitate in miniature the prevailing modes for men and women. At the table the plainest food was chosen for them, pickles, rich gravies, and coffee forming no part of these children's bill of fare.

It was indeed an extraordinary and unpleasant sight which the English lady now condemned. For, crowded on the parlor floor, monopolizing every inch of dancing space, were two or three score children—principally girls—bedecked with a sort of monkey-like elegance whose sight caused at once mirth and pain. The richest silks, of the most delicate and easily soiled hues, ruthlessly cut into flouncings and scallopings and panier over-skirts, and covered with laces worth many times their weight in gold, had been hung on these silly youngsters by their sillier mothers. Silk hose covered their lower limbs, which were exposed to the knee ; boots of satin to match the dress, or of golden leather that a drop of water will tarnish, tortured their aching feet. Every detail of the toilet of a Parisian woman of the highest elegance, or of the most doubtful virtue, was here repeated ; gloves with wristlets reaching almost to the elbow ; the latest *fantaisie* in fans—ah ! crack ! that one of tortoise shell with brussels lace trimmings was broken just then by that minx there who struck a boy across the back with it because he left her and

went to dance with another minx; that fan cost forty dollars, as you will find if you try to buy one like it in Broadway. It is a beautiful *objet* —a thing for a wedding gift, or a birthday present from dear friend to dear friend, to be used only on grand occasions, and to be kept a lifetime—nay, more than one; but there's the end of it now. The minx—(strange what ugly words are passed from lip to lip among the watching crowd of grown persons looking at this body of children, who, under other circumstances—for they are at an age when if ever children ought to be lovable—would certainly awaken admiration. "Impudent little huzzy!" "Forward minx!" "Ill-bred little animal!"—pretty ejaculations these, yet who shall say they are undeserved?)—the particular minx who broke the fan was a remarkably stout girl about twelve years old, whose fat body was covered with masses of costly finery from her head to her heels. Every day this finery was changed; even jewels were provided to fit each costume. Her manners were disgustingly forward; and Mrs. Underhill declared that she felt absolute nausea every time the girl approached her. The wretched child's mother had so little idea of the beautiful modesty which should be the ever-present attendant of a young girl, that she had caused these rich dresses to be cut *décolletées* out of all reason; and this, added to the repulsive forwardness of the girl's manners and her stout figure, created in the

observer's mind a strange sense of impurity; which, when you looked at it soberly, was wholly incompatible with her youthful age.

There was a rule at this hotel that children should leave the floor at nine o'clock. Fay Underhill's feet were twitching for a waltz with Stuart. Strauss's sweetest strains—those in which by flowing melody he embodies his idea of the Beautiful Blue Danube—floated on the air. "Oh, I'm crazy to waltz!" she whispered in her lover's ear. "These children will soon go, I hope," he replied, in a loud tone, that the mothers might hear it. They did, and turned up their noses scornfully at him as their only answer.

At length the hotel manager was obliged to interfere. At ten o'clock the children were dragged—with no little squalling and kicking of nursemaids—off the floor. "I won't go to bed!" "I'll slap you, you old thing!" Oh, beautiful specimens of American childhood and of the admirable management of a certain class of American parents! No wonder European visitors to our country, who are thrown in contact with the choicest vulgarians of our race, at the chief places of resort for tourists, should get so poor an opinion of American children.

At last Fay got her waltz. Resting blissfully in her chosen one's arms, she seemed to soar through space to the music of flutes, angelically played by obliging mortals. Enjoy your waltz, dear, innocent Fay, while you can. Youth passes with its

bright illusions; and the fullness of time brings bitter knowledge.

The waltz ended, and Stuart escorted Fay outside upon the wide piazza surrounding the house. The moon had risen, and shot down its silver on the rippling sea, which was sending up unceasingly its foamy surf upon the sandy shore. Arm in arm the lovers clung together. The piazza was crowded with a joyous throng. Music came from within. Peals of laughter rang out. Ah, youth and joy, these hours were made for you! Rippling waters, moon-glorious heavens, love in your hearts, no sins yet committed, sorrow still unborn—but the hour may come when the waters will be lashed by furious storms, when black clouds will hide the moon's silvery sphere, when love will change to hate, innocence to sin, and sorrow, clad in sackcloth, sit at your thresholds.

"There! ti-tum-ti-ti! That's the Lancers. Come in, Fay, and dance the Lancers," cried Stuart, brushing through the crowd with his sweetheart on his arm. At the door by which they entered was standing a dark, foreign-looking lady wearing a great quantity of diamonds and a bright yellow-satin dress. "Look at this big sunflower," whispered Stuart, and then he hummed in Fay's ear Brudder Bones's song, "Oh I'm just as happy as a Big Sunflower!"

"Do you think this yellow-satin sunflower with diamonds is happy?" asked Fay, laughing.

As they approached nearer, they heard her declare herself so. Not in the best English, to be sure; but she was intelligible, as she assured Meestare Weegans that she never was more happy than when to make his acquaintance.

"Meestare Weegans" was N. B. Wiggins, Esq., of Oshkosh—Take Notice Wiggins, the facetious Westerners called him. What those initials stood for, if not Nota Bene, no one knew, for it was thus he always signed himself. Some mutual friend had brought about this introduction to the opera-singer, whom Wiggins had admired when he first laid eyes upon her on the boat. The remainder of the evening he stood by her side, entranced by the eloquence of her broken English, and by the dark flashes of her sparkling black eyes, which had —there was no doubt about it—already done great havoc in the hearts of many men. Furiously jealous was Mr. Wiggins when she turned to speak, in a language which he could not understand, to the men of her own profession—who formed a background of black cloth, white ties and ditto gloves, to the vivid yellow of her rustling gown; and obliged to acknowledge to himself, was Mr. Wiggins, at the close of the evening, that not only was she a stunner, but she was "By jings, sir, the finest woman—yes, sir, *the* finest woman, by jings" —the "Sir" whom he addressed being Sir Air, or else Sir Wiggins himself.

"There's a place, Fay, side couple; see!" and

Stuart scudded across the floor with Fay still closely tucked under his arm. They were just in time, and another couple walked off as Fay and Stuart stepped into the only remaining vacant space. It was young Randolph Cabell, the newly married Southerner we saw on the boat, who with his pretty bride had lost the dance. They took the disappointment with perfect good nature, and shortly afterward retired.

"What a splendid-looking woman this is opposite us, Stuart," said Fay, in one of the intervals of repose during the quadrille. "Don't you think so?"

"Oh, this one right opposite? yes, rather—I was looking at her. Jove, isn't she gorgeously got up? Tell you what it is, Fay, she's one of those little girls *grown up*, expanded in every way, gorgeous 'fixings' and all."

Fay smiled, and as she did so she turned her eyes in the direction of an inner door. The crowd had greatly thinned out, as it was near the announced hour for the music to cease, and now instead of elegant ladies and gentlemen, a number of female servants were standing in the doorways looking on at the dancers. Among these was Marcia, her whole appearance so different from that of the servants near her, that, spite of her pitted face, her spectacled eyes and her plain dress —for the dress mania extended to the servants, and panier skirts, and flounces, and sashes, were fre-

quently to be seen among them—this quiet woman looked as if she might be a mistress, not a maid.

Stuart Phelps had observed the gorgeous lady before Fay spoke. It was Mrs. Duncan. His attention had been attracted to herself, by the expressive gaze she turned on him as soon as he entered the quadrille. He was about to bow to her, thinking he must have met her somewhere before, but the more he looked at her, the more convinced he became that this was the first time he had ever seen her. Still, her deep blue eyes were again and again turned on his face with a look in which admiration was so plainly to be read, that if all had not been engrossed in the pleasure of the dance they must have observed it; and Fay, occupied with the partner of whose partnership for life she felt so sure, was gliding through the measure, keeping joyous time to the music with her head and heart and feet.

Every one knows the last set of the Lancers; how every man starts off to his left, clasps hands with each lady he meets, bows profoundly to his own, and then begins the whole thing over again. This is gone through with four—or is it eight?—times; and each time that Stuart Phelps clasped the hand of the gorgeous lady, he was sure he felt her fingers cling a little to his own, before they separated. For once or twice he doubted the truth of this—thought he might be mistaken; and each time it became so much more marked, that his

theory of being mistaken was proved to be itself a mistake. Finally the last hand-joining was upon them. Stuart's heart quite fluttered. Nonsense, only a joke! Their hands meet—her fingers press his in a way that cannot be mistaken; her deep blue eyes dwell on his manly young face; he looks fairly at her—feels the pressure of her soft fingers, sees the look in her eyes—drops his own under so steady a gaze—but holds her hand so long that he misses the next partner—and becomes confused.

The pitted woman, Marcia, standing at the door, takes off her glasses, wipes them, peers forward an instant with wide-open eyes, then replaces her spectacles, and when, with flushed cheeks and panting breast, Mrs. Duncan finishes the dance, with some solicitude her servant advances and throws a rich cape over her shoulders to prevent her taking cold.

CHAPTER IV.

A SHRIEK AT SEA.

THE white flag flying at eleven the next morning, announced bathing to be safe. With the sun pouring down fiercely, a wind from the south, hot and dry as a simoom, the knowledge that he had not had a sea-bath for nearly a week (for he had been called to town every day lately by business, leaving the Branch before the bathing-hour), need I ask an excuse for Stuart Phelps for his Sunday bathing? But Mrs. Underhill refused to excuse him.

"You ought to have gone to church," said she, reprovingly.

"Oh, I'll go twice next Sunday to make up for it; that is, if I'm not in town," replied Stuart; "my church in town is closed. It will open when the opera does, I suppose. It'll be 'the season' then."

"Hush, Stuart, such nonsense!" said Mrs. Underhill, more reprovingly than ever.

"It's as true as gospel," persisted the young man. "Our minister goes to the White Mountains with regularity and dispatch every July. And

half the time when the church isn't closed he lets some egregious muff occupy the pulpit and preach such stuff as would disgust an intelligent monkey."

"I won't listen to such wicked talk," said Mrs. Underhill, turning away.

"It is too bad you have to go to town every day, Stuart," said Fay, in a sympathetic tone.

"I shan't go to-morrow," he replied. "Tuesday morning will do for once."

So on Monday morning, at the bathing hour, Stuart made one of the lively, bustling crowd that gathered on the beach.

As usual, the children were in force. Some of these were quite at home in the water, and proved as insolent and self-asserting there as in the ball-room; others were afraid of it, and shrilly shrieked as they were dragged into the surf. "You must come in! It will do you good!" cried a mother, dragging a trembling little girl of seven into the water. Good! Such a shock to such a nature were enough to do a harm that would last a life-time.

Mrs. Laidless, the English lady, spoke of it to Mrs. Underhill. "I am convinced that excitement of every kind is injurious to children. Their pleasures as well as their pains should be tempered as much as possible. Better that that delicate child should never know the bracing effect of a sea-bath than that, in the effort to obtain it, she should do violence to every instinct in her timid nature."

"I quite agree with you," said Mrs. Underhill, and went on to further comment in a wise and thoughtful strain.

The good mothers, talking in this sort, were suddenly interrupted by a loud chattering in a foreign tongue. Turning, they saw the prima donna, Madame Pittaluga, who had arrived the Saturday before, now arrayed in a bathing suit of brilliant-hued flannels, and looking, it must be confessed, the reverse of poetical. When attired in the rich trappings of the stage, with flowing velvet robes, queenly crown, and imperial ermine, Madame Pittaluga was no doubt a stately figure, in spite of—or perhaps because of—her two hundred pounds avoirdupois; and even in the drawing-room she managed, with the help of rich jewels, costly laces, and skillful drapery, to preserve a somewhat similar style of contour; but on the sands! in a parti-colored bathing dress! Let us forget La Pittaluga's figure, and dwell upon her face. A pretty face, beyond cavil—black eyes, small, red lips, and a little dash of the same color tinging her cheeks—the ill-natured said artificial in both cases—a clear olive complexion, and a profusion of black hair, soft and glossy, and which in one light had that superb purple tint seen only rarely, and without which a woman may not be termed a perfect brunette; these beauties were undeniably Madame Pittaluga's. Her features were small, and both her small face and her small manners seemed as if

they should belong to a body which would certainly not tip the scale at over a hundred pounds; some pert little French soubrette, giving the saucy *réplique* to her dignified mistress in the comedy; the very features you would expect to find under the mask of some fascinating *Titi* or *Debardeur* whom you had seen led away from a Paris masked ball, to sup at the *Café Anglais*. It was quite true that one of the lordliest of English lords, and one of the princeliest of Russian princes, had for a season been madly enamoured of La Pittaluga, but —neither had ever seen her in a Long Branch bathing dress!

Acting under the belief, which in the main was true, that bright colors best suited her complexion, Madame Pittaluga had provided herself with a flannel bathing dress wherein yellows and reds were made even more glaringly prominent by bands and bedizenments of white braid set on tunic and trowsers in the absurd idea of adorning them. Her waist was of that size which caused the sewing-girl who made the bathing dress to say of it privately, "It made a yard measure look sick." It certainly made Madame Pittaluga look healthy.

The prima donna stood on the beach and looked at the bathers with evident delight. She was accompanied by the tenor of the troupe, and the chattering that Mrs. Underhill and Mrs. Laidless had heard was caused by the voices of the lady

and the gentleman in amicable dispute. It was evident that Madame Pittaluga desired the tenor to enter the water; but he, dressed with scrupulous finish in the latest fashion, shrugged his shoulders vehemently, and replied in liquid Italian vowels to the effect that nothing could induce him to make himself a fright, or be dashed about by the turbulent surf.

Just as Madame Pittaluga had made up her mind to rush in alone, a man approached her, so strange a figure in his bathing dress, that the Italian woman, seeing that he was about to address her, looked at him in surprise, for the idea that she had ever before spoken to him did not for a moment occur to her. It was not until he spoke that a glimmering of his identity crossed her mind.

Mr. N. B. Wiggins was as long and lean as Madame Pittaluga was short and stout; and while her dress, in ill taste though it was, had nevertheless been manufactured and donned with the greatest care, his costume was composed of a shirt and trousers long beaten and faded into colorless limpness, stretched in this place, shrunk in that, and hired for the occasion for fifty cents from the bathing master. Mr. Wiggins stood six feet in his bony stockinglessness on the hot beach, his bashfulness before the woman whose sparkling eyes had captivated him, finding some relief apparently in the exercise of digging his toes into the sands, which were cool and grateful an inch below the

surface. His trowsers much too short, a bit of new rope tied around his waist, and a huge straw hat which had struggled with the winds and tides of many a busy summer, tied under his chin with a piece of coarse, red braid—such was the captivating *ensemble* Mr. Wiggins presented, in the presence of the lady who was in his opinion a stunner.

"Goin' to indulge?" asked he, with a grin.

"Yas," she replied with, as Mr. Wiggins thought, a bewitching accent, "I am going into the dulge."

"They say the water is first-rate this mornin'," he continued. "Ef you'll grab ahold o' my hand, I'll run you right under this here wave that's a coming in. No! Too late! There she comes. Look out for soapsuds, young man!"

The young man being the dainty tenor, and the soapsuds being the foam which flung its scampering fingers up on the beach a "*Per dio!*" and a rush shorewards from the former, did not prevent the latter from bespattering his polished boots; whereupon, muttering something about a thousand sacred devils, shrugging his shoulders at the sea, which really seemed not to mind it, the tenor touched his hat to Mr. Wiggins, bowed gracefully to Madame, and sauntered away in the direction of the hotel.

"He ain't agoin' in, *is* he?" asked Wiggins of the lady. "Won't wash, eh? Colors run, perhaps. Some goods is putty to look at, but they

won't stand the wash-tub. He's them, eh? Not fast colors, is he?"

To the which intelligible jargon, reminiscent of his career as a dry-goods merchant, Madame nodded her head with frequent smiles, and said "yas" six times, not understanding a word of what he was saying.

Leaving them to enter the sea—which Madame did with a little shriek, speedily clutching the safety rope, and clinging to it with the tenacity of a drowning person, in spite of the invitations of N. B. Wiggins to "strike out a little"—your eye for the picturesque may be gratified by observing Stuart Phelps and Fay Underhill. Reposing on the beach before plunging into the sea, Fay sits holding a bucket and spade which belong to a little girl who is tired of playing with them for the moment, and Stuart stretched at full length, is amusing himself by imbedding his hands in the sand—that plaything for old and young, babies and graybeards, at the seaside. Fay's dress is as pretty as the hideous Bloomer costume can ever be, Stuart's is only another of bathing master Sam's choice collection, no more graceful than that Mr. Wiggins wears; but youth and beauty may defy the most ungraceful cut and the most faded hues; and so in spite of their attire these young people look almost as well as they did the other night in the ball-room.

"Stuart," said Fay, "you remember that fine-

looking woman we noticed Saturday night? the one who danced opposite us in the Lancers?"

Just the least heightening of color in Stuart Phelps's face, Fay might have seen had she looked for it; but she did not. Why should she ever dream of such a thing as that Stuart Phelps should blush at mention of another woman?

"Yes, I know who you mean," he said, slowly, seeing she waited for a reply.

"Do you know who she is?"

"Not the least idea."

"Some of the ladies were talking about her this morning, and wondering who she is. No one knows. No one ever knew her before; no one ever knew any one who knew her."

"What a lot of knews, Fay; a regular ungrammatical knowed would be a positive relief."

"Oh dear, you needn't encourage me to be ungrammatical! I am so often enough."

"And what about the lady?"

"Why nothing about her. Nobody knows—I declare I was going to say nobody knows nothing—so you see what you get by telling me to be ungrammatical."

"What's the lady's name?" asked Stuart, keeping to the subject in hand more closely than Fay did.

"Her name is Mrs. Duncan. She is from the West somewhere, no one knows exactly where. What a vague place that West is! It's so enormously large."

"Yes. Taking Long Branch as our point of departure, you may say the West stretches from Sandy Hook to San Francisco."

"Three thousand miles! Three thousand enormous miles in which are cities, towns, villages, farms, inhabited by bright, wide-awake, intelligent, reading people,—and room for double as many more besides."

"Great country!"

"And somewhere in this great country was born and reared Mrs. Duncan," said Fay.

"But not born Mrs. Duncan; born Miss—what?"

"No one knows who she was before marriage, or who afterwards, for that matter. Cornelia Cornwallis says it is best not to notice her in the least until we know who she is. But I think that's too severe. I shall speak to her if I feel inclined, and the occasion offers."

"You're a dear girl, Fay, so good yourself, you never think of harm in others."

"Thanks for that bit of praise, Stuart. But I do sincerely dislike those croakers who are continually wondering if this person is quite the thing, and if so and so's pedigree is all right. As if anybody in this country had a pedigree in the accepted sense of the term! The only pedigree any of us can have, or need care to have, is a record of personal good behavior."

"Perhaps that's the very thing they require in Mrs. Duncan," said Stuart.

"It may be so. Yet if Mrs. Duncan were a *man*, well-dressed, good-looking and evidently rich, there's not a lady here who would not think well of him, and not trouble herself to ask who he was beforehand."

"What, Fay Underhill on the woman's-rights war-path!"

"Never you mind, sir. I'm too young for my words to have any great weight on such subjects, but when I get to be forty and have the dignity of that age, then you'll see what Fay Underhill can do."

"In the first place Fay Underhill will at the age of forty be Fay Underhill no longer, but Mrs. Stuart Phelps, wife of the undersigned, comfortably fat, rosy, happy, and contented, and with all the rights she wants."

Now this girl loved this man so fondly that if he had said that at the age of forty she would be blind of one eye, deaf in an ear, and lame of a leg, she would have thought the picture not altogether unpleasing—that is, if he had said he liked these features in a woman. So the thought of being at forty nobody other than Mrs. Stuart Phelps, "comfortably fat"—when she always associated fat with discomfort—"rosy, happy, and contented, and with all the rights she wanted," seemed to her loving heart to be the very pinnacle of womanly glory.

He arose and extended his hand, and she sprang

to her feet, and briskly running into the surf, both cried out with delight as the foamy spray flung its froth above their heads.

"Isn't this—f—fun!" cried Fay, gasping for breath.

But Stuart was off. Too good a swimmer to stay by the rope where Fay and Madame Pittaluga timidly disported themselves, he struck out upon the blue waves in a manner, to Fay's mind, fraught with peril. Poor little Fay looked anxiously after him as now diving beneath the water, now rising to the surface, he put yard after yard between herself and him.

"Isn't it dangerous out there?" she timidly asked of the bathing master, Sam, who was holding a little girl by the shoulders and floating her about to her infinite delight.

"If you can't swim it is," he replied, laconically.

"Oh, *he* can swim," she said, more to herself than to any one else.

"Is that Mr. Phelps out there, Fay?" asked Mrs. Barham, a lady of half a century, who wanted to pass for half that.

"Yes, Mrs. Barham; doesn't he swim splendidly!" answered Fay, with enthusiasm.

"I suppose so. I should think he'd prefer to stay by you, however."

Mrs. Barham never failed to say a galling thing to her friends and acquaintances when she could.

A woman of fifty who thinks she looks no more than twenty-five, and wants the flatteries and attentions that age commands, could never quite forgive Fay Underhill for being only eighteen.

In another direction a swimmer who had ventured out even farther than Stuart was to be seen. Everybody wondered who it was.

"I don't know how people can be so reckless," said Mrs. Barham, tartly. "I'm sure I wouldn't go off there for anything."

"But you can't swim, Mrs. Barham," said Fay, gently.

"I suppose I could if I tried," answered the elder lady, clutching tightly to the rope as she spoke.

"There's mamma waving her handkerchief to me," said Fay; "I suppose she means for me to come out. Why, I haven't been in ten minutes."

Madame Pittaluga now scrambled up the bank with N. B. Wiggins closely following her. An unceremonious wave struck them in the back and sent them sprawling on the beach.

"Queer fish, those!" said Mrs. Barham, contemptuously.

Mrs. Barham, besides her fifty years, had a fortune of fifty thousand a year (or such was the report), and in her veins ran blood which she considered bluer than any Castilian's. There was a Lord Barham in England whom she claimed as near akin to her; and as his lordship had never come

over here to dispute her assertion, and no one had ever taken the trouble to go over there and ask him if it was true, she got full credit for the relationship—among the credulous.

"The lady has a lovely voice," said Fay. "I heard her running the scales this morning."

"Who is she?"

"Madame Pittaluga, the new prima donna. I am going to hear her the very first night she sings."

Here Mrs. Underhill shook her parasol at her tardy daughter, and Fay began to wade out. Her feet sank deeply in the wet sands and her dripping dress seemed to weigh a hundred pounds; but she got dry foothold at last, and was scampering towards her bath-house when she heard a distant scream.

That far-off swimmer they had noticed was in distress. Another scream, fainter than the first—then Fay saw her lover wheel about in the water and with rapid strokes cut his way to the drowning person; sinking for the third time when Stuart Phelps clutched the insensible form! The bathing master struck out now to help both.

No matter. "All right!" shouted Stuart, with a cheery voice which made Fay's heart, chilled to the core with fright, dance like a freed bird. On he came, straight for the shore, bearing his burden.

They strike the beach. The crowd gathers

around, eagerly staring. The lazy loungers in the summer-houses upon the cliff come streaming down upon the sands to stare too, and mingle their careful toilets with the wild *deshabilles* which emerge from the bath-houses—wildest among whom is N. B. Wiggins, clad only in shirt and trowsers, his yard-long suspenders flapping at his heels.

The inanimate form of the saved person is cast upon the beach, the bathing master aiding, and for a moment Stuart drops on the sands exhausted.

"Who is it?" many tongues ask, from the outer edges of the crowd.

"A woman," says one of the inner circle.

"A woman!" chorus the many tongues, in delighted amazement at such a romantic incident.

"Who?"

"Ah yes—who is she?"

Stuart lifted himself up at this, as eager as any to know who the lady was he had had the honor of saving from a watery grave—for he had not looked in her face as yet.

Mrs. Duncan at this moment opened her blue eyes wearily and looked about her. "Where am I?" she said, with an originality of remark which was quite overlooked in the excitement of the moment.

"She is recovering," whispered one. "You are safe now," said another." "You were drowning," explained a third, as if encouraged to tell all, now

that the ice had been broken, "when this gentleman went out and rescued you." He led Stuart forward, dripping but handsome.

Mrs. Duncan looked at him with eyes that spoke far more than simple gratitude.

"You saved my life!" she said.

Stuart bowed.

That odious Mrs. Barham shrugged her shoulders at this scene—but Mrs. Barham was of a most unfortunate disposition, as has already been clearly shown, and quite capable of envying Mrs. Duncan the felicity of having been saved by so handsome a fellow as Stuart Phelps. "If the woman is such a famous swimmer," said Mrs. Barham, and here she shrugged her shoulders again more emphatically than before, "I don't wish to be severe, I'm sure, but certainly she chose a most auspicious moment for her drowning scene, if it was her purpose to be saved by young Phelps."

Meantime Mrs. Duncan had been wrapped in warm blankets and conveyed to the hotel, while Stuart quickly went into his bath-house to doff his wet dress.

"Well," said Mrs. Barham in conclusion, "I suppose the woman will be *somebody* now. At these vulgar watering-places an adventure of that sort is as good a passport to acquaintance as an introduction from a marquis."

This was Mrs. Barham's opinion merely.

CHAPTER V.

A "BRANCH" DINNER.

It may fairly be doubted whether at Long Branch dinner is the great event of the day. This used to be said of Niagara, and it was not flattering. But, after all, a waterfall is only a waterfall, and when you have looked at it from above, from below, in the sunlight, in the moonlight, in the starlight, and in a thunder-storm, you may be said to be pretty well acquainted with its charms. When it comes to staying weeks beside it, you may be excused if you seek some other diversions *pour passer le temps*. Dinner is an agreeable hour in the summer day's journey always. When to spend the summer at Niagara was the manifest destiny of all who had the slightest claims to belonging to the *ton*, the five o'clock dinner at the hotels was elevated into the very crowning glory of the day's existence. Men and women both were invisible to the naked eye for hours previous to it; and at the appointed moment they sallied forth clad in the last element of gorgeousness, and prepared for slaughter—of hearts and dinner.

But at Long Branch the bathing makes such a

delightful diversion, occupying almost the entire morning; the afternoon game of croquet—an unknown joy when going to "the Falls" was the great mode; the hop in the evening—though "hops" have been hopped ever since the Pilgrims came over; daily newspapers from town; sitting in summer-houses on the cliff to read them; driving on the shell road—these and other pleasures serve to divert the mind's eye from the once all-absorbing topic of dinner. But it is an important event for all that.

At this moment the ladies of the hotel where our party is stopping are dressed for dinner; and you are requested to believe in this case, as you sometimes are by the playbills at the theatre, that a lapse of several days has occurred since the event last described.

Mrs. Duncan's drowning exploit at once made her an object of sympathy, and from that she rapidly became something very like a lioness among the frothy crowd assembled at the hotel she graced with her presence. The incident was written up at column length in the daily newspapers by bored correspondents, who had been sent to Long Branch, and who, lounging listlessly about, knowing no one, known to none, wondered what could be the magnet which yearly draws down thousands to this Jersey strand. Enlarging upon the original theme, the men of the quill did not hesitate to aver that Mrs. D——n, the heroine of the deep blue

wave, was a lady of great learning, varied talents, immense fortune, and peerless beauty—a queen in the social circles of Long Branch, and said to be engaged to be married to a prominent member of Congress. In regard to Mrs. Duncan's beauty, while the gentlemen at Long Branch were unanimous in their belief that the verdict of the correspondents was strictly correct, the ladies were somewhat divided, a few (but these were chiefly the elderly ones) esteeming the picture not overdrawn, and by far the greater number saying that Mrs. Duncan, although certainly a pretty woman, was not by any means the peerless beauty depicted by the fertile pens of correspondents.

"For my part I think she's really homely," said Mrs. Barham, who had never in her life been known to see beauty in any woman except Mrs. Barham.

As for Fay—poor Fay did not know what to think of Mrs. Duncan. So far as Mrs. Duncan's beauty was concerned, Fay was clear enough on that point; Fay thought her remarkably handsome. There was something about her manners, too, that Fay couldn't help seeing was very attractive. She seemed always to have a bright answer for every remark that others made; something which, without apparent effort, caused her to appear so well-informed, so witty, so clever! And by this it will be seen that since her escape from a watery grave, Mrs. Duncan and Fay had become acquainted.

Good Mrs. Underhill had helped nurse the beauti ful woman her son-in-law elect had saved from drowning, and even blue-blooded Mrs. Barham had taken enough curious interest in her to admit her to the felicity of her acquaintance—without an introduction.

Stuart Phelps had not returned to the city since the day of the rescue from drowning. He made to himself various satisfactory explanations of his disinclination to attend to business in town—there was really so little doing just at this moment—there was no pressing necessity for his going to town—and indeed the weather had become at last *too* trying. "I might as well take my holiday now as any other time," he said. Fay was delighted at this. Only, with her father in town, there was one vacant place in their four-seated carriage, and Mrs. Duncan managed to get Mrs. Underhill to invite her to occupy it, oftener than Fay liked.

And more than this—Mrs. Duncan sat at the same table with them in the dining-room,—and is sitting there now. Clad in a delicate mauve silk, marvelously becoming to her clear complexion, blue eyes, and brown hair, the handsome Mrs. Duncan is carrying on an animated conversation with Mr. Phelps, while Fay and her mother are eating their dinner in silence.

It is well somebody is silent in that noisy gathering. The crowd had been increasing day by day, and to obtain a seat at any table was now difficult

It had been, in some measure, because of the crowd that Mrs. Duncan had been placed at the table with the Underhill party. She instantly paid them a pleasant compliment by saying that to be with them made her meals a pleasure to look forward to, instead of, as they had been before, a pain and a disgust. There was a boy of eight years who had sat next her previously, whose mother gorged him with food whether he wanted it or no, in the vain hope of fattening up the dyspeptic little skeleton. Disdaining the use of knife and fork, this cherub generally took a pickle in one hand and a greasy chicken wing in the other, and biting first at the former, then at the latter, frequently managed to drop them both, to the disadvantage of Mrs. Duncan's dress.

From their adjoining table, the Underhill party could hear this mother—Mrs. Botkyn was her name, and Johnny Botkyn was her boy's—giving her orders for dinner.

"Soup and fish and turkey's wings and lobster salad and sweetbreads with mushrooms and roast turkey with stuffing and cranberry sauce and apple fritters and sweet potatoes and corn and rice and pickles and two cups of tea and a glass of milk. I'll tell you what I'll have for dessert afterwards."

While the colored waiter departs on the troublesome errand of procuring these various articles for the maws of two sickly-looking individuals, a woman and a boy, let us listen to what Major Cheraw

is saying. The Major is not at Long Branch for the summer. "I detest Long Branch," says the Major, "but I am forced to run down here occasionally to see my friends Mrs. and Miss Underhill, to whose absence from the city no philosophy can ever reconcile me," and here the Major bowed low to the ladies at whose table he was dining. "I return to town to-morrow morning early," he added.

"Your detestation of Long Branch arises from your hatred of the hotels, Major Cheraw," said Stuart, who knew the Major's foible, and loved to draw him out.

"Perhaps so," said the Major. "I confess to a feeling of disgust for the system of feeding which obtains in hotels conducted on the American plan. In no other country in the world could this plan prevail for a day, because in no other is good food wasted as it is in this; for observe that when these various ill-cooked dishes are placed before you at the table, and you, finding the rabbit stew is unpalatable, the lobster salad dressed with vile oil, the *maccaroni au gratin* burnt to a cinder, become discouraged and relinquish further pursuit, then remark, I pray, that the waiter who gathers up these little dishes, whose very shape and size are offensively suggestive of messes, remark, I say, that this waiter makes no distinction between those dishes your fork has touched and those which are in the same condition in which he brought them,

but piles one on top of the other, mashing all this food into a messiness fit only for pigs—to whom I suppose it goes. I hold it among the bright possibilities of the future that the American plan of hotel management shall be laid forever low."

"I quite agree with you, Major Cheraw," said Mrs. Duncan. "It is a vile and expensive and unhealthy system—tempting tired stomachs to eat and eat, a bit of this, a bit of that, four meals a day sometimes—'might just as well eat 'em—they charge you all the same,' I overheard our neighbor, Mrs. Botkyn, say yesterday."

"I have known a gentleman of wealth," said the Major, "who had twice made the tour of Europe, while staying at one of our huge hotels, paying four dollars and a half a day for his board and lodging, leave the groaning table whereon his dinner was served at the hotel and betake himself to the nearest German restaurant, there to eat sausage and black bread with a relish. 'They seem so simple and honest after all that sickening flummery,' says he. The European plan, as we call it here—and how or why the American plan ever had birth is to me a mystery—is the only fair, honest, and healthful plan known. If you pay a certain price for everything you eat you will not be likely to order a dozen times more than you want. If you dine with a friend, it is not fair that you should pay for your dinner at the hotel. This abominable plan is the very groundwork of that dreadful system of

over-eating, which makes the United States the home of dyspepsia, and causes the lean, lank, sallow dyspeptic to be the recognized type of the American, as round, rosy, jolly Johnny Bull is of the Englishman."

At the table next to that which the Major was edifying with these wise remarks, sat a striking illustration of the Major's discourse, in the person of Mr. Take Notice Wiggins, of Oshkosh. Mr. Wiggins was at the right hand of Madame Pittaluga. The unfortunate negro who had charge of their table was flying about like a madman; a prima donna, a tenor, and a baritone to wait upon, and N. B. Wiggins "bossing the job," as the man told the carver in the kitchen.

Mr. Wiggins kept filliping his fingers impatiently. "Where's that head waiter? Here! hi! You! Say! Wine card!" When in possession of the card Mr. Wiggins begged the prima donna to say what sort of wine she preferred. She mentioned the brand of champagne.

"Well, here's luck," said Mr. Wiggins, as the Jersey cider bubbled in the glass.

The men drank the toast without understanding it, or caring to do so, but Madame Pittaluga tossed her head to one side in the piquantest way, and asked what "loog" meant.

"Why, success, you know; hope you'll be successful when you sing at the Academy."

She understood this and thanked him; and

plucking a rose-bud from the large basket of odorous flowers which stood in front of her, and which bore an admirer's card; she stuck it in his buttonhole and asked him to wear it for her sake.

Take Notice had never taken a wife. He was awkward, homely, chewed tobacco, and talked bad grammar; but, he was so much fascinated by this woman that it was with the utmost difficulty he refrained from asking her then and there if she would marry him. He felt that this would be premature, however, and bided his time.

They arose, and Madame Pittaluga, with Mr. Wiggins close at her side, the Italian men following, left the room. Every eye was on them as they walked down the long space of the dining-room, and Mrs. Barham was actually rude enough to lift her eye-glass.

"On piatza is well," the tenor managed to say to Wiggins when they were comfortably seated on the piazza surrounding the hotel.

N. B. couldn't understand what he meant. Madame, in her pretty way, made him comprehend that the tenor meant to indicate that sitting on the piazza was agreeable.

"Oh yes, of course, very much so," ejaculated Wiggins, grinning and nodding his head vehemently at the Italian to encourage him in the belief that his English was understandable; "as you remark, on the pyazzer a fellow feels first-rate."

The Underhill party were now walking up and

down, Stuart and Fay together, Mrs. Underhill and Mrs. Duncan behind them.

"Your daughter is a charming creature," said Mrs. Duncan to Mrs. Underhill.

"Fay is a darling girl!" said the elder lady.

"Your only child?" inquired Mrs. Duncan.

"Y—es," answered the other lady.

The keen blue eyes quickly turned on her face, and seeing some confusion there, Mrs. Duncan said to herself, "That 'yes' is very like 'no;' perhaps she has other children, and wants to conceal it."

The balcony rapidly filled with people. Carriages drove up. One of these, a rich, dark landau, drawn by two superb bays, a perfect match, contained some members of that aristocratic family at whom we glanced on the boat, whose name is a synonym for opulence in New York ears, and whose ancestor was a poor fur-dealer. They handed cards to their footman, who gave them to the hotel clerk, and an instant after they drove off.

"The —— family!" said Mrs. Barham, as Mrs. Duncan and Mrs. Underhill approached. "They have a cottage here; they're never seen at the hotels, except when they leave a card on some one who is stopping at them."

"I suppose they think the hotels are vulgar," said Mrs. Duncan, half sneeringly.

"One certainly does get thrown in with people one knows nothing about," replied Mrs. Barham in a tone of her blue-bloodiest *hauteur*.

If Mrs. Duncan winced under this thrust no one saw it, for the evening shades were now falling, and lights were glimmering on the avenue. The piażza was crowded. Every one preferred sitting out-doors to entering the lighted parlor. Nevertheless, the musicians came in, seated themselves by the piano in one corner of the large drawing-room, and began scraping their cat-gut. This was the signal for a swarm of children to re-assemble, and then began the usual Babel of shrill small voices clamoring, one for this, another for that; a waltz, a redowa, the Lancers, a quadrille! Mothers were called in, and Mrs. Botkyn, in a struggle for the partner for the waltz that her blessed Johnny wanted, clutched the girl by the neck as she was hurrying by, as if she had been a chicken bone, and brought *her* mother up in battle array to know what on earth Mrs. Botkyn meant by ill-treating her daughter in that manner.

And outside, the lookers-on gazed through the windows, and yawned wofully behind their hats and their fans at the monotonous sights and sounds.

"It's so dull without dancing men," said Mrs. Barham, arranging her laces and shaking her head so that her diamond earrings touched her cheeks caressingly.

"I think it's a stupid place, any way," said a plain-spoken New England girl sitting near. "I don't see what people want to come here for and

spend their money like water. It's all sham and hollowness, and I believe that half the people who come here and cut a swell go home and live on bread and cheese for the rest of the year to make up for it. I'm going to-morrow. You don't catch me here again. If I find I need sea air I'll run down to some village on the New England coast, pay seven dollars a week for board, and wear a cotton print gown and a hat with a brim as wide as an umbrella."

"Every one to their taste," said Mrs. Drillmajee, a lady with two marriageable daughters whom she had escorted to the watering-places for the last six years; "*we* have to live in the style we've always been accustomed to. *My* daughters could never wear cotton prints."

The truth was that Mrs. Drillmajee and her two marriageable daughters lived in abject poverty three-fourths of the year, and flaunted vulgar finery at the watering-places during the other fourth, in the hope of catching "eligible" husbands.

Overhearing these remarks, a young man, seated in a corner completely in shadow, said to his companion in a low voice, stroking her dark curls,

"What do *you* think of the place, dearest?"

"The place where I happen to be at present is paradise," she answered, laying her cheek against his shoulder.

Lowering his head the young Southern husband kissed his bride. They had no difficulty in being

happy at Long Branch. They kept together almost constantly, and made no acquaintances. Every one admired them; nothing more awakens respect and admiration, even among the most thoughtless and heartless, than the sight of a true and beautiful conjugal love.

Stuart Phelps and Fay somehow found themselves among the shadows on the piazza also.

"I begin to think these watering-place hotels are bad places for people with the least dignity or self-respect," said Fay. "You are thrown in with people you know nothing about, obliged to dress two or three times a day, the same as you do during the fashionable winter season; you keep late hours, eat unwholesome food, get hot and tired, and then perhaps walk by the sea and are chilled through. You remember Uncle Lathrop's Long Branch experience: he went to one of the hops at the Greatenormous Hotel, got overheated, walked to his own hotel at midnight along the cold seashore, dressed in white linen clothing, and that very night was taken with a quinzy, from which he almost died before morning."

"Oh, the crowd at the Greatenormous Hotel is something too horrible! I wouldn't stop there for anything on earth. If I were asked where a foreigner could see the vulgarest mob in America, I should say, go look in at the Greatenormous Hotel at Long Branch, on any Saturday night during August."

"The truth is that the best people don't come to any of these hotels."

"And how about the Underhill family—the very best people in the wide world?" said Stuart.

"Papa says he will never come another season. He will buy a country residence somewhere, and then we shall all live together with our household about us, as gentlefolks should."

"Yes, the young couple, Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Phelps, and the old couple, Mr. and Mrs. John W. Underhill, will live together comfortably as gentlefolks should." And with her arm tucked under his they resumed their walk.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STORY OF THE SANDS.

THEY found on their return that Mrs. Underhill had retired to her room, and left word for Fay to follow immediately. So the lovers said good-night. The piazza was pretty well deserted now. The noisy children had gone long ago, the musicians had departed, the drawing-room was empty, the lights turned down low. Only a few men were sitting about outside, imbibing mysterious fluids through the medium of straws, in a ghost-like sort

of way. Stuart looked at his watch. It was nearly twelve o'clock. Lighting a cigar, he strolled leisurely towards the beach. The moon was up, and the ocean was silvered by its beams far outside the bar; there, miles away, it seemed peaceful; but on the beach the waves lashed and thundered with all the wild fury of high-tide at night.

Stuart walked along the sands, absorbed in thought. His dear little Fay! How he loved her! What a blissful married life was in store for him! To marry the girl of all others best suited to him in mind, in station, to bring to her a heart, a soul, a body, absolutely as pure as her own, this was gratification few men enjoyed. For up to this moment, be it distinctly understood—up to this moment, when he walked, carelessly puffing his cigar, on the sands at midnight, Stuart Phelps was a pure boy, a pure man. Within the last fortnight he had been half amused, half ashamed at certain trifles—a pressure from a hand, a glance from an eye, and that hand, that eye, not those of Fay Underhill—but to say that for one moment his faith in himself was shaken, that for an instant he was disloyal to the girl to whom he had pledged his troth, would have been falsehood.

Walk on in the moon's beams, Stuart—oh, linger in the light, poor boy!—no, he throws away his cigar, he strides into shadow, a lithe form creeps up behind him, and when, hearing the rustle of a gown, he turns quickly, Temptation stands

in front of him, and smiles a beckoning smile that might almost have lured an angel.

"Why, Mrs. Duncan! you here?" he stammered out.

"Yes; I have been strolling here some time, trying to be rid of my unhappy thoughts."

"But, you are not alone?" said Stuart, instinctively clinging to the proprieties for an instant.

"Why not? I am not a chit of a girl, that I should be afraid of a moonlit walk alone on the sands. Besides, when a woman has passed through what I have, she becomes strangely indifferent to trifling proprieties. I was sad; I came here to be alone."

"Pardon me for intruding on you then," said Stuart, lifting his hat. "I will bid you good-night."

"No," she said, hastily. "I am glad you have come. Don't go away—unless," and here a faint, sad smile played on her face as she looked up at him in the moonlight, "unless *you* are afraid of Mrs. Grundy."

"Not I!" said Stuart, laughing, and drawing himself up as if with unconscious manly defiance of the world that should dare to question his goings and comings.

"Shall we go up and sit in the summer-house?" said Mrs. Duncan. "I am tired of walking."

They ascended the flight of wooden steps which led to the bank above, and sat in the summer-

house. The restless sea with regular beat dashed noisily at their feet. The houses behind were in shadow; the walks deserted.

"So you are not afraid of a censorious world?" she said, looking straight in his eyes. "How I honor you for that!"

She was very bewitching to-night, Stuart could not help thinking. Over her dress of tender lilac silk she had drawn a jacket of purple velvet; and about her head was flung a fleecy cloud of white drapery which made her look like some vision of human loveliness from the Orient.

"You make too much of it," he replied. "A man deserves no credit for such a thing. He must be a poor coward who would govern his conduct by his fears of being gossiped about by a lot of old women."

"How bravely you say that!"

"My own sense of what is right is guide enough for me. I don't claim to be a saint, but I have been trained by good teachers and I can trust my moral sense implicitly, I think. My father is one of the purest men—one of the truest Christians—that ever lived, and my mother is an angel. I am not likely to forget that I am the son of such parents."

There was a pause.

"Yes, you are good," said Mrs. Duncan, breaking the silence in a low, musical voice. "You have never been brought into contact with the

wicked world. You have never been tried in the fire of bitter persecution—your life has never been made a curse to you, until you have longed to die and be at rest."

"Have you suffered so?" said Stuart, gently.

"Ah, if you knew what I have suffered! If you knew what it was to yearn with a woman's heart for the love of a strong, good man—and yearn for it in vain. If you knew what it was to be persecuted by the love of a man whose very presence is loathsome to you, but who pursues you with the relentlessness of a fiend. That has been my fate—that will be my fate until the end—and I shall never even have the poor privilege of pouring into a sympathetic ear the story of my sorrows and my wrongs."

Stuart moved uneasily on his seat. Mrs. Duncan was silent, looking out sadly on the sea.

"I'm sure, Mrs. Duncan," he said, hesitatingly, "if you mean that I would not sympathize with you, you—mistake me very much."

"Oh, if I dared tell you!"

"I confess I should like to know—to know something more about you, if it were only to silence the—" he stopped and bit his lip.

"I understand. It is my fate. You have heard unkind things said of me?"

"Well, I didn't exactly mean that. But, so little appears to be known about you."

"What the world may know of me is easily

told. I am a widow. My husband was a wealthy citizen of San Francisco, and—he is dead. I have no relations on earth. I am all alone, mistress of my own actions, sole guardian of my own wealth. The world can know this, if it cares to know it. To me, it is a matter of entire indifference. But, what the world can never know is, that beneath all my lightness of manner I carry a heavy, heavy heart."

"You miss your lost companion, no doubt," said Stuart, a little uncomfortable, he hardly knew why, and doubtful *what* to say.

"He never gave me love," said Mrs. Duncan. "He was more like a father to me than a husband. I was light-hearted enough, until—until within a fortnight past."

"Something has happened then?"

"Yes, something has happened," and she rose to her feet and drew the folds of her fleecy nubia about her face. "I have found what it is to love, and to feel that the being I love belongs to another, and can never be aught to me."

"Shall we go in?" he said, offering his arm. "It is getting late."

True enough. One o'clock. At the door of the hotel they fairly ran against Marcia, peering into the darkness through spectacled eyes, a shawl thrown over her head.

"Were you waiting for me, Marcia?" asked Mrs. Duncan.

"Yes. Anxious."

"Is she a relation?" asked Stuart of Mrs. Duncan in a whisper.

"No. A servant. But devoted to me—at least I think so," this somewhat hesitatingly.

They separated, and when Mrs. Duncan entered her room, she passionately kissed the hand Stuart Phelps had held for an instant as he said good-night.

Then, when Marcia's back was turned, she drew again from her heaving bosom the crumpled letter, and glared at its written story with excited eyes.

"Come, if you dare!" she hissed between her teeth by way of answer to its threatenings. "Come, if you dare! Stuart Phelps shall be mine in spite of you, and in spite of Fay Underhill, too."

She felt the touch of a cold hand upon her shoulder, and hastily concealed the letter.

"Your bed is ready. Better get some rest," said the woman with the spectacled eyes.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ART OF HEARTS.

REFERENCE has been made to the blue blood of Mrs. Barham. Reference to the blue blood of Mrs. Barham was constantly being made by Mrs. Barham herself; and it is one of the most amusing features of the great sham society to which she belonged, that as the lady had a great deal of money, the great sham society never took the pains to inquire into the question of the blueness of her blood. If it had done so, it would have had no difficulty in discovering that an ancestor, no more remote than her grandfather, had kept a grocery, in Boston. The story of how he acquired his wealth need not be recited here in minute detail. He was a thrifty German, and had bought swampy lands, that in his day lay far outside the city limits; now they constituted a fashionable suburb, the tiniest little box of a house in which rented for more per month than the lands had cost an acre. At the age of twenty, the heiress of these acres had married a lieutenant in the Navy, and from him had come, perhaps, her first idea of the desirability of blue blood. He belonged to an old Massachusetts fam-

ily, strict Presbyterians, who had given him the cold shoulder because they considered him a *mauvais sujet;* and on his first cruise after his marriage, the *mauvais sujet* had been swept overboard; his cruel relations said he was "drunk, of course," and transferred the cold shoulder to his widow, as if *she* were drunk of course. It may seem strange that Mrs. Barham had never married again; but if you take into consideration that she required in her suitor as large a fortune as her own, and blood even bluer—if such a thing were possible—the reason for her prolonged widowhood may be more easily understood.

Perhaps the most galling trial Mrs. Barham had to endure, was being obliged to keep up friendly relations with distant kinsfolk from Germany. The number, and if it must be written, the plebeian character of these was something appalling. On and on they came, one family after another, aunts, uncles, cousins by the score, male and female; from the nursing infant to the gray-haired man. All hunted up their American cousin, Frau Barham, and Frau Barham was terribly ashamed of them. Her long-sustained fiction of blue blood —for of late years she had not confined herself to the glory of her husband's blue blood, nor to Lord Barham in England, but had invented a German lineage for herself, which dated from Barbarossa, and was nearly allied to the present reigning house —how could she keep it up if some of her aristo-

cratic friends were to pop in and visit her (she had an elegant suite of rooms at a very exclusive private hotel in New York) while she was entertaining some tow-headed peasant from Coblentz, or Cologne, who called her cousin, and wore a blue cotton coat? Fortunately the cousins stayed but a short time in New York. The most of them were very poor, and got out to Minnesota and Wisconsin as soon as possible.

But, at the present time, one of Mrs. Barham's German cousins was here—here at Long Branch! But for qualifying circumstances this would have been a death-blow to Mrs. Barham. The qualifying circumstances were that he was rich, rather good-looking, well-dressed, frank, amiable, and honest. The disqualifying circumstances for his being a satisfactory cousin to Mrs. Barham were that he was entirely without pride, was intensely democratic, wouldn't take the hint about keeping up the fiction in regard to blue-blooded ancestry in Germany, and, on the contrary, was always making some dreadful reference to his former life and occupation there, which fell on Mrs. Barham's ears as the loathed "*Quand j'etais lieutenant d'artillerie*" of the first Napoleon on those of the blue-blooded monarchs of whom the plebeian artillery lieutenant had made himself one.

Mr. Hermann Kalbfleisch was a pork packer at Chicago. His business was profitable, his health good, his spirits light. He was one of the fairest

of blondes, so far as his hair and eyelashes were concerned; beard he had none, nor a sign of it; his complexion was pink from chin to forehead, an unvarying tinge, as if he went through life blushing. He was easily amused; laughed heartily and loudly, merry peals pleasant to hear; and there were moments when Mrs. Barham was half inclined to the belief that at last she had found a German cousin of whom she might, in a qualified degree, be proud.

For it was much in Mrs. Barham's eyes that the Underhill family should so like Hermann. Mrs. Underhill said it was a pleasure to meet such a fresh, hearty, unaffected, unspoiled young man; although, so far as these qualities were concerned, Mrs. Barham could have shown her scores of her cousins who also possessed them and who were now tramping over their three-dollar-an-acre farms in the far West, in wooden shoes perhaps. But Hermann was rich and lived in a city; and although his pork packing was a most unpoetical, not to say ill-smelling and vulgar, business, yet he had made a fortune by it, and—but when this was said, it was generally enough; nothing more was needed; money covered the whole ground.

Fay's father, John W. Underhill, who has as yet been little mentioned, principally because he was one of the quietest and most unobtrusive of men, said it made him feel twenty years younger to have that young German fellow around, and as he made this remark to his wife, sitting on the piazza on the

morning following the events of the last chapter, they heard Kalbfleisch's silver ripples of laughter a half octave above the others as he enjoyed the felicity of being made a "booby" in a game of croquet which he was playing with Fay and some girls from Philadelphia.

"Now, I told you how it vas, Miss Vay," he said; "so long I hev to play croquet mit a lot of ladies and no oder man, den I git myself made a donkey booby; I git nervous—I don't see vat I vas about."

"Why, Mr. Kalbfleisch!" said Miss Cornwallis, the leading belle of a hotel farther up the beach, and a noted Philadelphia beauty; "I'm sure, I think we're the ones to be nervous. Just think! Only one little gentleman—one single gentleman—I may say one little single gentleman—for five beauless ladies! There! Fay has roqueted my ball while I've been talking. I shall never be a good player, I fear, especially when there's a single German gentleman around to make me nervous."

This was a tone of wonderful lightness and badinage for Cornelia Cornwallis, the stateliest girl of her set, and was conclusive evidence that Kalbfleisch was a nice fellow, to whom one could say anything, sure of his accepting it in good part, and not presuming on it.

"Did you ever play Presbyterian billiards?" asked Take Notice Wiggins of Madame Pittaluga, as he sat with the operatic party on the piazza.

Madame lifted her shoulders almost to her ears, smilingly shook her head from side to side, and said,

"I do not understand."

"I mean, did you ever play the game they're playing there? Suppose we try one—come along, Moosoo!"

Here Take Notice clapped the tenor soundly on the back. The harmless "Moosoo" was gazing at far-off vessels through an opera-glass, and turned around with as startled a look as if he had been on board one of the distant craft and she had struck a rock.

"*Pardon*," he stammered; "*vous dites? je ne vous comprends pas.*"

French was a foreign language to these Italians, and it seemed natural enough to them that all foreigners should understand it. I have known a Frenchman whose knowledge of English—his only foreign language—was restricted to "bifstek" and "God sev de Quin," try with these words to inquire the way to the Royal Palace in Madrid of a Basque peasant fresh from his province.

"Come along; I'll show you," said Mr. Wiggins, starting to his feet, and Madame graciously arose also.

But the tenor declined. With a pleasant bow he shook his head and said, "*Non, je vous remercie.*"

"Shall we go it alone, Madame?" Mr. Wiggins asked, pointing to the game which was in progress on the smooth lawn.

"I prefare walking to zese gemes," she said; but it is doubtful if she understood his question, though the answer fitted well enough. And so they walked arm in arm upon the broad piazza.

"De sea is beautifool dis morning," she said, gazing across the sheet of water, which lay placid almost as a lake after its fierce turmoil of the night.

"Yes, it is kind o' purty," he answered; and there was a pause. His entire energies for the moment were directed towards regulating his pace in such a way as to accommodate his long strides to her short footsteps. After a turn or two, they sat—this time at the far end of the piazza where there were no listeners.

"How do you like our country?" he asked of her, after they had sat in silence for a few minutes.

"Oh, I can scarcely say. When I make my *débût*, if so I am successfool den I sall like it. For an artiste, success you know, it is all. If I were in Paradise and de critics there put in de newspaper dat I sang false, den I should not like Paradise."

There was something so amusingly professional about this, that Wiggins burst into a laugh.

"Well, I suppose that's natural enough. After all, your biz is the great thing. That's why I don't care a snap for these watering-places."

"You will be present at my *débût*?" asked Madame.

"You bet I will!" he answered. "I'm bound to see you through before I go West. You never thought of settling down in America, did you? Lots of foreigners do, you know."

How to tell this woman he was in love with her, was what Take Notice Wiggins had been turning over and over in his mind for a week. He had never seen a woman who so caught his fancy. She was jolly, and he liked jolly women; she was stout, and he liked stout women; she was a foreigner, and that he always thought he should not like, but he did; it gave an added zest, a more delicious piquancy, to her sparkling chatter.

"You bet I will be at your deebew," he continued; "I'd do anything most that I thought likely'd please you. Is there anything you can think of, that I can do that would please you?"

"Yas," she answered, with a piquant smile. "Do not any more—chew tobacco."

This was a surprising request; for Mr. Wiggins, like many other men addicted to this habit, was under the impression that nobody suspected it in him.

"My last chaw!" ejaculated Take Notice, contributing with a powerful sweep of the arm this choice morsel to the fertilizing of the soil by the roadside. "I'll never take another."

At this heroic renunciation of a delicate delight, merely to please her whim, is it extraordinary that Madame Pittaluga should have been so flattered,

that she smiled bewilderingly upon poor Mr. Wiggins, extended her plump hand to him, and let it rest for more than an instant in his bony fingers? And this being the case, is it at all wonderful on the other hand, that Take Notice should have felt his heart leap up to his throat, and have suddenly found courage to stutter out:

"I wisht you'd stay in this country! I wisht you'd come out to Oshkosh and see ef you'd like to live there."

Now no sooner had Mr. Wiggins uttered this ejaculation than he repented of it. In truth the good man was half ashamed of his infatuation for the prima donna. He was a shrewd, sharp man, was N. B. Wiggins, and whatever else up to this time might have been laid to his charge, that of being, as he expressed it, a "foo-foo" had never been. See how she'd like Oshkosh! The question more vital was to see how Oshkosh would like her! For be it known to all men that Oshkosh is fastidious, and one of the proudest moments in the career of Artemus Ward was, when he was able to quote from the *Oshkosh Courier* (concerning his lecture) the profound endorsement —"We don't know when we have been more so."

"Perhaps I may come there and sing sometimes," she answered, not taking his hint, and—strange vagaries of the masculine mind! this greatly relieved him. "Is there an opera-house at Kosh—how do you say its name?"

"Oshkosh. Yes, there's an opery-house. We had an old hall there where we held political meetings and temperance gatherings and so on, but when the lumber business got so lively and people made money, they got kind o' stuck up and said how that the old hall wa'n't good enough for Oshkosh. Why, ma'am, there's some of our folks think Oshkosh will beat Milwaukee all hollow before long! I swan I believe there's some think they'll live to see it take the starch out of Chicago. Yes, we built an opery-house. It was all serene at first; the sanguine ones thought the spec was going to pay big. I never did, but as an enterprisin' citizen, of course I had to take as much of the stock as I felt able to; and now—why, you can bake me in a Milwaukee brick kiln if the darned stock is worth thirty cents on the dollar!"

It would have been amusing to know exactly *what* Madame Pittaluga gathered from this recital; but, with her quickness at reading facial pantomime, she saw that a catastrophe was involved somewhere, and so she shook her head with a despairing air, as who should say, "This is indeed terrible! You and Oshkosh have my profound sympathies."

"You see our people air peculiar somehow—though there's some of the nicest people in Oshkosh there is in the world—still there ain't quite enough of 'em, to make a fust-class entertainment a success. But let a circus er a nigger show come

along, and they'll take money enough out of the town to charter what rolling stock we want to carry our lumber to market in the winter season—and that's something purty hefty, you can bet your bottom dollar." But, feeling perhaps that this statement was somewhat exaggerated, Mr. Wiggins thought it necessary to modify it by laughing slyly and winking his eye.

The game of croquet was ended, and Cornelia Cornwallis and Mr. Kalbfleisch had come off victorious. Fay Underhill had been unusually quiet the whole morning, and Cornelia said, when she struck her ball against the stake,

"Fay Underhill, I believe you're cross because Mr. Kalbfleisch and I have had such a brilliant triumph. Do you want another game?"

"No, thank you, Cornelia, I'm tired. I don't care very much for croquet. Stupid game, rather."

What made the game and everything else particularly stupid to Fay this morning was that Stuart Phelps, who was usually lounging about the parlors or piazza before they came down, waiting to go in to breakfast with them, was on this morning nowhere to be seen, though the sun showed high-noon and the surf was now thronged with bathers. Where could he be? Fay asked herself again and again; but the shy puss was too proud to ask the question of any one else.

Among these bright girls from Philadelphia

there was one who read the simple page of Fay Underhill's heart as easily as you do this printed one of mine; and Pony Parsons was fond of such reading. As Cornelia and Mr. Kalbfleisch sauntered beachwards, Pony Parsons and Fay Underhill walked slowly behind them.

"Are you going to bathe, Fay!" her mother called out as she passed; but Fay shook her head and threw a kiss backwards as she continued her walk.

"I know what's the matter with you, Fay. You're mad because your tootsicums hasn't put in an appearance this morning."

"Pony Parsons, where you pick up such slang is to me a mystery. Your language is fairly unintelligible at times."

"Well, I will speak plainly. I will use words —words worthy of a philologer, or an ethnol-ibob. Your tootsicums being absent, the natural inference is that something has happened to him. Query, was he on a tear last night? Did he indulge in a mill, and get—"

"What language to come from a young lady's lips! Who'd think your father was one of the most eminent jurists in the country!"

"What of that? Why fling my poor, erring father in my face? I'm not a jurist—never was, never will be. Do you think because my father is a Philadelphia judge that my literary fodder must necessarily be Poke upon Littlestone or the

Revised Statutes? No, *sir!* I prefer the *Turf* and the *Spirit*. I forgive father, of course, but one of that sort in the family is enough."

There was something so amusing in this absurd girl—for it needs no harsher word than "absurd" to characterize her—that Fay, in spite of the depression of her spirits, was forced to laugh, half against her will. Pony Parsons's assumption of masculinity was absurd principally because she was physically a little midget of about ninety pounds' weight, with hands so small she was obliged to take children's sizes in gloves to fit her, and feet which necessitated the same peculiarity in boots.

She affected the masculine in her attire to as great a degree as her parents would tolerate, and every day or two would see amazement pictured on their elderly faces at their daughter's "putting in an appearance" perhaps at dinner when they had Quaker friends as guests—wearing some astonishing new device in collars, cut in the fashion of those of men, a nobby neck-tie, sleeve-buttons representing horse-shoes, or perhaps with her tiny figure enwrapped in a coarse pea jacket into whose capacious pockets her diminutive hands were deeply thrust.

But, the crowning disgrace in the eyes of the eminent jurist and his equally dignified wife, was to meet their daughter in some quiet street—Arch Street, at any point, for instance—or on Walnut

above Broad, where Sanctimony and the Proprieties lurk in the very air and make it heavy—driving along at a break-neck pace in the open buggy, holding the ribbons with the skill of a professional driver, and wielding the whip like an incipient Postilion—of Lonjumeau or elsewhere. Her horrified father had taken her to Europe and kept her there at boarding-school for two years. "It will take a snaffle-bit to hold the Pony now," she averred, to one of her most sanctimonious friends. Punishments of all sorts had been inflicted upon her. "It's no use, father," she would say, rubbing her little pug nose against his ear, "it's my style." And the fond father would kiss her heartily, and say, "Well, I suppose I must put up with your 'style,' as you call it."

Pony's name—ah yes, I am sure you have been wondering about that odd name of hers—but, in truth, she was christened Susan. One day her father said to her, "I tell you what it is, Susie,—you're my pony,—my little, frisky, skittish pony that I can't break in, do what I will."

And bursting with laughter the little creature broke from his arms and galloping around the room in frantic imitation of a young horse, holding the reins of an imaginary steed and flourishing an equally visionary whip, she began to sing

"Pony Parsons is my name!
Pony Parsons is my name!"

"Good gracious, Susie, do be quiet," cried her father; "you'll have the neighbors in to know what on earth's the matter." But from that, out, the *sobriquet* of "Pony" clung to the girl persistently.

"And Pony I will ever be even if I get married a THOUSAND times," she cried.

The truth is that Pony Parsons was as harmless as a kitten—and very lovable too—when, as often happened, she would throw aside her "style," and show herself as what she was, a good-hearted, honorable girl, who hated lies and all deceptions with a fury which covered a host of faults. Her father and Mr. Underhill had been friends before she was born, and to attempt to set up a coldness between the girls now, on account of Pony's absurdities, would have been an insult to Mr. Parsons which Mr. Underhill would hardly have inflicted on his old friend even if his daughter had been guilty of a real crime; but no girl was farther removed from such a possibility. "Still," Mrs. Underhill sometimes said to her husband, "I'm glad Fay is not like that."

While Fay was seated on the crowded beach in too moping a mood even to go in bathing, Stuart Phelps, in his room on the top floor of the hotel, was languidly brushing his hair and yawning at the shadow of himself in the glass which looked out at him as stupidly as he looked in at it. He had not slept much during the night; it was not until day-

break that he had been able to drive away the vivid remembrance of the scene with Mrs. Duncan on the beach; to silence her tender voice repeating the story of her heart's longing, which had said to him as plainly as any words could do, "I love you"—and although he did not admit this to himself, even in thought, yet he felt it—he knew it—and deceived himself grossly in not plainly confessing it to his own conscience. Then he fell into heavy slumber and wild dreams, now of joy, now of terrible anguish, in all of which Mrs. Duncan figured, and which so tortured his brain that every time he awakened he rejoiced to find this was but a dream; and resolved to sleep no more. Then dozed again; again waked; and so the morning had fled.

"Now it's so late I shall get no breakfast," he muttered, prosaically.

A rap at the door.

"Come in."

A colored servant, with boots in one hand, and a letter in the other.

Boots and a love-letter! Leather and a heart's passion! Ah well, life is full of this pitiless sort of satire.

"I blacked your boots, sir," said the man, "and I found this stuck under the door."

"So Mrs. Duncan did not give her letter to a man who was fetching up my boots," Stuart thought, and was thankful for it; and made his

douceur to the servant larger than he otherwise would. We like to be romantic, when we can.

He had never seen Mrs. Duncan's handwriting in his life; and yet he knew instinctively that the letter he held in his hand was from her.

"Stuart Phelps," began the letter. Stuart whisked over the leaf and saw there were four closely written pages; and it is a fact worthy to be remarked in the history of this experience, that, even at this point, after this beautiful woman had opened her heart to him, showed him she loved him, almost supplicated love in return, he heaved a deep sigh of fatigue as he contemplated the task of reading her effusion; and even took out his watch and wondered whether he might not better try yet to get some breakfast, and leave the reading till some other time.

It was too late for breakfast; and Stuart sauntered out upon the piazza, and seeing the two chairs in which Mr. and Mrs. Underhill had lately sat so comfortably placed together, the young gentleman seated himself in one, put his feet upon the rounds of the other, and leaned back in that *degagé*—I might say national—attitude, which causes caricaturists to represent the typical American as a man reading a newspaper with his feet on the mantlepiece.

"I cannot tell you," the letter said, "what a night I have passed! Oh, if you knew how intensely reticent I am by nature, then you would

appreciate the depth of sadness which made me pour into your ears last night the story of a heart to whose sufferings you may be hopelessly indifferent. Yet it cannot be possible that this is so. You seem different from all other men whom it has been my lot to encounter in life hitherto. I have tried to analyze the unwonted impulse of my heart which made me speak to you so freely last night. It is not like me to speak thus to one who is, after all, a comparative stranger. Oh, how can I call you so? *You* a stranger? No, no! If it be overbold in me to say so—I cannot help it—for you have saved my life, and while I have a woman's heart and a woman's undying gratitude I can never forget that fact—never look upon you with the cold, formal gaze of stranger unto stranger. In the hour when you rescued me from the jaws of death, Stuart Phelps, you gave me a claim upon your charity, your forbearance, which you may be forced to exercise. *Why did you bring me back to a life which had no joy in it for me?*"

"Puzzling question, rather," muttered Stuart, dropping the hand which held the letter, and gazing out seaward in a meditative manner. In the delicate meshes of feeling which Mrs. Duncan was entwining about him his struggles were of the gentlest, it must be confessed. If he had been less innocent he would have been more wise, perhaps.

He resumed his reading: "Whenever you wish it—whenever you will give me the opportunity—I

will relate to you fully the history of my life, and then you will learn how cruelly I have been deceived, my highest hopes frustrated, my noblest dreams dispelled. These are the things which have made me a poor wanderer—poor I mean in heart, in love, for in worldly goods I am rich enough—a wanderer over the earth, unloving and unloved. These are strange words for a woman like me to write; but I feel no hesitation in sending you this letter, although I have no certainty that you will not show it about among your friends, boast of it, perhaps. Ah no, I wrong you. Forgive me! Forgive me!"

Here Stuart paused, and thoughtfully twisted his moustache for a few minutes before resuming:

"I know your heart is too gentle to do that which would cause me shame and humiliation; and it is to that good heart I appeal when I ask you to answer my letter. Give me one word—only one word—of kindness to soothe my tortured spirit."

There was much more of the same sort, but it is entirely unnecessary to repeat it here. When the young man reached the end of the epistle, he fell to whistling gently to himself as he folded it up and tucked it in his vest pocket. Then, as if suddenly struck with the idea that the letter was—though perfectly harmless, certainly—not a bit of harm in it, of course—yet not precisely the kind of letter he should like to have drop out of his vest pocket on the lawn, where Fay might find it, per-

haps. It was signed "Diana Duncan," in a neat and legible hand. On the whole, the letter would be safer in an inner breast pocket of his coat. He put it there, and sauntered into the public room where there were writing materials for gentlemen's use. After balancing a pen on his finger for a few minutes, he wrote:

"DEAR MADAM:—I received your letter. Please don't write me any more such letters. I don't approve of such letters." Then feeling that there was repetition somewhere, he stopped and read what he had written. Having done so he tore it into small bits, and sprinkled the bits into a capacious India-rubber spittoon which stood near his chair.

"MRS. DUNCAN," he began again. "I received yours. I must ask you *please*—not to write me again. I don't approve—"

"Heavens!" he exclaimed, rising and going to the window, and gazing into recesses of the hotel where a dish-washing, enormous enough for a giant's table, was going on, without taking in the least detail of it, any more than if he had been a blind man. "What a prig she'll think me if I send that letter! It reads like a school-girl writing to a naughty man to 'please don't.' Jove! I'm not going to make an ass of myself, if I *am* engaged to be married!"

With that he sat down again and wrote this:

"DEAR MRS. DUNCAN:—I appreciate the confidence you are so good as to place in me, and I trust I may do nothing to prove that I am unworthy of it, or capable in any way of dishonorable conduct. I am sorry you have suffered and are unhappy." He dropped the pen, and sat thinking for an instant. "What shall I say next?" he muttered. "I never wrote such a letter in my life—don't believe many other fellows ever did, either. I must wind it up somehow." Thereupon he dipped the pen in the ink, and added—not too wisely—"If I can be of any service to you in any way, pray command me. And believe me to be,

"Very sincerely yours,

"STUART PHELPS."

Slipping this precious missive into an envelope he addressed it, sealed it, and carried it to the clerk.

"Oh, say," he exclaimed, in a delightfully offhand manner, although he felt confident the puissant seigneur of a clerk was reading him, as well as the address of the letter, through and through, "will you just put that in the lady's box?"

"Send it to her room," said the clerk opening his hand and letting it fall on a little alarm bell which stood at his side. A colored servant approached—and the letter was gone.

Stuart stepped out on the piazza. Then came sober second-thought. "I don't see what I an-

swered that letter at all for! I might have let it go unanswered."

At this moment Fay turned the corner of the seaward piazza. Seeing Stuart she ran towards him with outstretched hands. The sight of her was so delightful to him, so restful to his spirit, so gratifying to every pure instinct of his being, that it was with difficulty he refrained from catching her up in his arms and rapturously kissing her, in sight of the score or more of ladies who were to be seen inside the drawing-room drearily yawning through the open windows—among whom was the blue-blooded Mrs. Barham, sitting as usual—in her own opinion at least—"high on a throne of royal state."

"Why, Stuart, where have you been all the morning?" cried Fay; "but no matter, you'll tell me that in the carriage. For you'll come drive with us, won't you? Our carriage is here. Papa don't go to town to-day, so we'll be just four—and no intruders."

That sent his thought back to Mrs. Duncan, and a slight frown lingered for an instant on his brow. The next, it was gone—and he was in the carriage beside Fay, his darling Fay. How pure, and fresh and sweet she looked!

Leaving the ocean drive, Mr. Underhill's coachman turned the horses' heads towards the interior, and for hours they drove about through those charming rural lanes which half the people who

flock to Long Branch never see. Astonishing stories of improvements, magical almost as the transformations of Aladdin's lamp, Mr. Underhill had to tell. He had known Long Branch for years, and might now be, he dared not say how much richer than he was, if he had bought extensively of its cheap lands a decade ago. A cottage —Mr. Underhill priced it yesterday—with its surrounding grounds was now held at $42,000; and last year its present owner had bought it for $25,000. The land on which it stood was sold ten years ago for $600. But who could have foreseen that this bit of Jersey sea-front would ever be the great marine suburb of New York!

"To own a cottage and grounds at Long Branch would be pleasant, I confess," said Stuart, looking at his watch, "yet there is another enjoyment—far less costly—which I shall not disdain when it offers."

"What is that?" asked Mrs. Underhill.

"My dinner. It is now after four, and I've had no breakfast."

Mrs. Underhill was shocked—Fay was horrified! —they were afraid the dear boy would faint from inanition, before they could arrive at the hotel; but the dear boy survived to prove once more that appetite is the best sauce.

CHAPTER VIII.

MEN'S WAYS.

ANOTHER accomplishment (besides pork packing) which Mr. Hermann Kalbfleisch possessed, was that of singing, in a rich tenor voice, sweet little German love-songs. As soon as the girls discovered this, you can imagine how they plied him for songs! "Another!" and "just another!" and so it was that the strains of Abt and other melodious Germans rippled in lyrical flow again and again in the Long Branch parlor.

Now it is worthy of notice, that somehow or other, whenever there was anything particularly loving in the song he was singing, Hermann's eyes almost invariably turned in the direction where Pony Parsons happened to be sitting. Seeing this, Pony felt it her duty to respond in some way to his attentions, and generally did so by squinting at him in her most saucy manner when she thought he was not looking; a proceeding which nearly convulsed the other girls with laughter. Cornelia Cornwallis protested against it.

"I do assure you, Pony," said the stately Cornelia, "such conduct is intolerable. It is as much

as I can do to keep from laughing at your tricks, and to do that while that charming young man is singing so sweetly—and merely for our gratification too—is the greatest breach of good manners possible. I wish you would stop it. I don't like to say anything harsh, but still I must tell you that your squinting in that frightful way behind Mr. Kalbfleisch's back is very unladylike."

But as the days rolled by there came a change in Pony's manner. Whether it was Cornelia's severe demeanor, or the conviction that even a pony has duties to the society in which it moves, or something as yet undefined, Pony's eyes forgot to squint while Hermann was singing, and sometimes one would have thought that they were actually looking at him in a tender and sentimental manner. This seemed incredible, and perhaps it was a mistake ; but Fay Underhill mentioned it to Cornelia and Cornelia said she had observed it also.

One afternoon when they were sitting around the piano, Fay holding a book of newly published poems which Stuart had lately given her, Stuart himself in a thoughtful posture on the sofa, Cornelia ensconced in an easy-chair with a piece of worsted-work in her lap as interminable as Penelope's tapestry (for her working at it averaged about ten stitches a month), Mr. and Mrs. Underhill and Mrs. Barham present, and a background of hotel guests to complete the picture, Hermann Kalbfleisch sat at the piano, his strong white fingers

skillfully running over the keys, and his mellow voice reaching successive high notes in an ecstatic love-song, clear and true as a chime of silver bells. Pony was standing leaning on the piano in front of him, and as usual, his eyes wandered continually to her, while the cry to his beloved, his "liebe kleine," filled the air with melody.

Suddenly he stopped; leaning over the key-board he folded his arms, and resting them on the little space by the music-rack, said, with a frank smile:

"Miss Pony, vat vor you don't poke your eyes to your nose any more ven I sing de little Yarman love-song?"

Pony was startled—Pony looked as if she were going to bolt; but Hermann held the skittish creature with a gentle rein. The girls laughed—and Hermann's silvery laugh rang out louder than the rest. When Pony saw he was not angry she looked relieved.

"Ah, you tink I don't saw you once," he said, "but I did; I saw you most efery time, sticking your little eyes to see vere your nose vas gone to. First I said to myself, 'Hermann Kalbfleisch, did you sing dat little song avay from de time, or de tune, or into de wrong key?' So Hermann said to me 'No, all right.' So den I say dat nice little young lady make fun by me. Not?"

Pony Parsons, with her faculty for "reading" people, read here a nature so sweet and ingenuous,

and—or else her reading was very much at fault—so partial to her withal, that she could have applied whip and spur to her very self by way of punishment for having even for an instant cast ridicule upon him. The truth is, from the very first she had liked him marvelously well—a character so sympathetic and tender as his ingratiated itself without difficulty into sterner hearts than that which Pony bore in her little bosom; but the fear of being made fun of by "the girls" was so terrible to this remorseless fun-maker herself that she often took this means of heading them off. The cruel inventor of the absurd nickname, "Tootsicums"—which she mercilessly applied to every gallant who bowed the knee to the charms of her companions—now saw a prospective horror in being taunted with the existence of a Tootsicums of her own. And a German Tootsicums! One whose twists of the language were sometimes very funny—indeed, very frequently so, to a party of giggling girls. Oh no; she must disclaim this Tootsicums, even if she had to do it by the novel and beautiful process of squinting when he sang.

This was her first idea; but little by little his sunny nature warmed her very soul, and instead of standing behind him and squinting, or fiddling on imaginary instruments, by way of accompaniment to his harmonious chords, Pony found herself, to her own astonishment, leaning on the piano in front of the young German in the manner already

mentioned, eagerly drinking down every sound he uttered, or standing beside him, her trim little Byron-like head, with its mass of short dark ringlets, swaying in time with the measure he was playing.

"You make very sweet music, sir," said Mr. Underhill to Hermann, while the tenderness of the garden scene in *Faust* softly rose from the keys.

Hermann inclined his blonde head forward; and the pink flush on his cheek grew a little deeper, perhaps, with gratification, as he replied:

"I tank you. I am very glad if it gif you bleasure."

"The Germans of the upper classes," said Mrs. Barham, in a peculiar drawl, which invariably announced some blue-bloody talk; "the Germans of the upper classes," and here she bobbed her head up and down in a system of telegraphy all her own at Hermann, who was now trying to remember something difficult, and, not succeeding immediately, was frowning at the keys, his attention wholly engrossed, "the Germans of the upper classes, I repeat, are always fine musicians; is it not so, Hermann?"

"*Was ist das? Oh ja*—yes," he replied, "I subbose so. Dem hev blenty money und blenty time for study music das is not so wonderful dat dem upper glasses is good musicians. I subbose dem is good musicians. I bin tole so. I don't know much about dem upper glasses in Yarmany

myself," he went on, with his musical laugh; "I never see him. My fader—das is Mrs. Barham's half-uncle—he was a poor man mit little vineyard on de Rhine, und I was poor little boy mit wooden shoes on till I come to dis country;" and here he struck out on a glorious bit of Beethoven, with his face lifted upwards in a rapturous musical ecstasy, as unconscious of the writhings of the mortified Mrs. Barham as if she had at that moment been planting in a vineyard on the Rhine, while he was playing Beethoven on a Long Branch piano.

"How did you learn music so well, then?" asked Mr. Underhill.

"Oh, I don't know," he answered, modestly. "I don't play so very correct—but I got music in my soul, I subbose. De first time I efer see a piano, I yoost sit down und blay a little someding. Den ven I gits money enough from my beesiness in Chicago, I buys a few books und a piano, und haf a vriend vot gif lessons, come to my room, und show me somedings. Den, ven I learn dem rudiments, it is so easy, so easy!" and one of Chopin's Polonaises danced brilliantly on the keyboard.

Delighted, they kept silence; and when it was over Stuart Phelps, who had been mute as a mouse the whole morning, occupied with thoughts he would not willingly have had read by that company, felt the spirit move him to say something, and he said it:

"Were you in the pork-packing business before you went to Chicago, Mr. Kalbfleisch?"

"No," he answered, "I git into de pork-packing beesiness gradually after I go to Chicago;" then he added proudly, "I subbose dere is more hogs in Chicago as in any odder city in de world."

There was an amused titter at this, Mrs. Barham impatiently beating her closed fan against her finger-tips while it lasted. The titter, the hogs, the wooden shoes, the vineyard on the Rhine, and the story of Hermann's poverty told by himself, were sore trials to the patience of the blue-blooded grocer's granddaughter. Abruptly and absurdly feigning a headache, she arose and walked out on the lawn, twirling her parasol around and around as it rested on her shoulder, with a petulance which vanished like mist before the sun when the carriage of some of the aristocratic cottagers passed, and its occupants bestowed upon her a gracious bow.

"There is a good deal of swinishness to be seen everywhere in this country if you look for it," said Cornelia Cornwallis, leaning back comfortably in her chair and folding her shapely hands in her lap—the Penelopean worsted work already laid aside.

"So?" said the German in some doubt, as not exactly comprehending.

"And as much at Long Branch as elsewhere," added Cornelia.

"That is true, Cornelia," said Mrs. Underhill; "I declare I never in my life saw such utter piggishness as is to be encountered at every meal at the table at this house."

"This house!" ejaculated Stuart, "*This* house! Good gracious! You ought to take dinner at the Greatenormous once! Then you'd see. Why, the manners of this house are as those of Chesterfield in comparison."

"Then I beg you'll never invite me to dinner there, Stuart," said the elderly lady.

"No more watering-place life for me, after this season," said Mr. Underhill. "I'll buy a little box of my own in the country and take my family there."

"Hum!" said Pony, tossing her head somewhat viciously, "I wouldn't let my father do that."

Mr. Underhill burst out laughing.

"There's a girl of the period for you," exclaimed he; "she wouldn't let her father do anything he liked!"

A graceful couple, arm-in-arm, passed through the drawing-room out upon the lawn and so in the direction of the other hotels. Cornelia Cornwallis bowed and smiled to them; and the gentleman raised his hat and gave it so graceful a swing before he replaced it, that it seemed a cavalier's salute which included every lady present.

"How sweet that dark-eyed girl is!" said Mrs. Underhill, as they walked away.

"I think the gentleman is splendiferous," said Pony.

"Who are they, Cornelia?" asked Fay

"Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Cabell, of Georgia—old friends of our family. Their plantation adjoins ours—that is, it did, in the pecunious days when we had a plantation—which time I suppose you are aware is past and gone."

The Cornwallis family of Philadelphia belonged to that small class of wealthy exclusives who had inherited not only large estates in Pennsylvania, but fine rice and cotton plantations in the South as well. The war had made sad havoc with these estates, and rather than encounter a different order of things to that which they had hitherto known, the Cornwallises had sold their plantations at great loss. Cornelia was known as "a bit of a reb" among the girls.

"The lady is very beautiful," said Stuart Phelps.

"All the female rebs are pretty," said Pony, pinching the cheek of the fair Cornelia.

"Were you a rebel, Cornelia?" asked Mrs. Underhill. "I say 'were' because, happily, all that has passed away now."

"Why, yes, ma'am; I must say I naturally rebelled against having two hundred thousand dollars taken out of my pocket as it was when the Stars and Stripes floated over the Georgia coast. One does not welcome poverty without some rebellion of spirit."

"I'm sorry you're so poor," said Fay, her fingers slightly touching a costly lace jacket, fine as a cobweb, which Cornelia was wearing at the moment.

"Another of my plans for the future," said Mr. Underhill, "is to travel through the South; a part of the country I've never seen."

"I don't believe you'll like it," said Cornelia.

"Indeed? But *you* do."

"Oh yes, I like it very much; but then I'm different. You're a rich, money-making New-Yorker. I'm a quiet Philadelphia girl with a spice of the Italian love for the *dolce far niente* in my nature. I like the South—the climate is so delicious."

"But surely, Cornelia, you don't like the food! Hog and hominy! Ugh!" said Pony.

"Dem nice fat clean hog like we have in Chicago is very goot," said Mr. Kalbfleisch, who had left the piano and become an interested listener to the conversation.

"A strict utilitarian like yourself, Mr. Underhill, would be horrified at the slow movements, the lack of 'vim,' 'push,' 'snap,' and whatever else you call it which has made the history of these Northern States the wonder of the world," continued Cornelia. "Chicago is a great place; so is New York—in a comparative degree after Chicago, of course"—this with a sly look at Kalbfleisch—"but when one gets tired of the lo-

comotive speed of these cities, it is amazingly restful to light upon some little Southern village as lively as a snail, with its scores of tattered negroes sunning themselves around the Court House steps, and its dignified 'Colonels' and 'Judges' whose clothes are rather shabby, but whose manners are grand."

"Yes," said Stuart; "your speaking of their manners makes me think of a Southerner I know, a lawyer—who every time he says 'good-day,' slips his left hand in the breast of his buttoned frock-coat and spreads open the fingers of his right with the palm outwards—for all the world as Henry Clay did when in the act of delivering his most flowery orations."

Those who were looking or cared to observe it might have seen the spectacled and pitted Marcia come and stand for a while on the piazza and look out restlessly towards the restless sea. None but Stuart Phelps saw her lift her hand in the air, a bit of paper rustling between her thin fingers.

When she had disappeared, Stuart asked those present to excuse him. Five minutes after, Marcia overtaken, the bit of paper read, he knocked at a door in the hotel.

"Come in," said Mrs. Duncan.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHARM OF A WOMAN'S EYES.

THIS was the interview long prayed for by the beautiful widow, in which she was to tell Stuart Phelps the story of her life. Some days had elapsed since that on which Stuart had answered Mrs. Duncan's letter, and other letters had passed between them since. Every one of these Stuart had read or written with a groan of annoyance, hoping that this at least would be the last. But whatever his feelings in regard to this correspondence—which certainly had been none of his seeking—it was this which had succeeded in now drawing him to her private parlor, pledged to listen to some tale which might take hours in the telling, might or might not be true, and true or false was—or should have been—of no import to him.

The analyzing of the exact state of his feeling for Mrs. Duncan had occupied Stuart Phelps's thoughts during many a moment when Fay wondered what made him so taciturn, and had on this very day caused the innocent and unsuspicious girl a vague fear that her conversation and that of

her friends and acquaintances was not brilliant and entertaining enough for the lover whose mental qualifications she esteemed of the highest. Little did she guess what lofty question those mental qualifications were engaged upon. Nothing more nor less than this vital one: Ought I to continue my acquaintance with the beautiful Mrs. Duncan?

In her presence, with her violet eyes fastened on his face, her soft voice cooing her lovelessness —which in his secret soul he knew meant simply her love for him, and which had been the refrain ever repeated of her siren's song since—was it after the escape from drowning, or did it begin before?—he felt all sympathy and tenderness for her, poor, unhappy lady. With one of her letters in his hands, perfumed with the same delicate odors which floated about the folds of her dress and rose from the soft laces on her bosom and from the tresses of her rich brown hair, the spell again was upon him, only less strong than when in her presence. But let her fail for one single day to write him, let her fail for one day to engage him in an interview, and a coldness toward her that was almost repugnance, took the place of sympathy.

If you, cynical man of the world, can believe that this young man was absolutely pure; if you, utterly untemptable man or woman, can understand that he was not altogether so strong as he might and should have been; and if you will both

add to these facts the other facts that he was young and had never before been thus beset, you will find his varying states of mind easy to understand. How impregnable a fortress the very strongest man's honor would prove under so vigorous an assault as this which Mrs. Duncan was making on young Phelps, and so prolonged a siege as it proved to be, is a debatable question. And it is a question that will not be debated here.

Once, when seated on the beach with Mrs. Duncan—not alone—oh, no; numberless people flitting about, children romping, carriages passing with rumbling wheels; he had fallen to comparing her to his pure, sweet Fay; and when Mrs. Duncan, suddenly speaking, had said, "What is it that you are thinking about me?" he had said, "I was thinking how like you are to Cleopatra," at which she had seemed as pleased as if he had called her an angel. After he had left her he had thought that it was pretty stupid to call a woman Cleopatra; in the first place because it implies an Antony; and Stuart Phelps laughed outright at the absurdity of comparing himself to Mark Antony. Next, it being generally conceded that Cleopatra was a person of lax morals, could it be accepted as a compliment by any woman to be likened to Cleopatra? and thirdly, was Stuart Phelps quite sure that Cleopatra was not a colored woman? He was certain he had seen her pictured somewhere, as nearly black, grinning horribly at a pusillanimous Antony,

with a remarkably chalky skin, who was propped up on pillows in an uncomfortable position at her feet. Stuart was almost sure that Shakespeare spoke of Cleopatra as having a "tawny skin." Almost, but not quite sure; and as there was no copy of the bard's works at Long Branch, so far as he knew, he couldn't look it up, even if it mattered. And it did not. For black or white, vicious or virtuous, Mrs. Duncan had seemed mightily pleased when he called her Cleopatra.

If the poor fellow could have got outside of himself, and taken in the bearings of this affair from an exterior point of view, how quickly he would have rendered a correct judgment upon it! He would have said—as you do in judging him—"young man, give the cold shoulder to that woman; pack up your things, leave Long Branch, get married to the girl to whom you are engaged, and live happy ever after." But, in actual practice, to give the cold shoulder even to an offensive person, is a difficult and an unpleasant thing to do; how much more so to frigidly drop the acquaintance of a beautiful person, a bewitching woman, with violet eyes, whose life you have saved, and who pours unceasingly into your flattered ears the confidences of her heart, in a voice whose mellowness never was surpassed.

In fine, Stuart's chief form of consolation for himself—in those moments when he was unsympathetic, and consequently self-reproachful—was in

assuring himself that soon the imbroglio would be broken up by his leaving this watering-place and going back to town ; there to resume his old, comfortable life of honest work by day, honest recreation in the evening, and honest church-going—spite of his fling at the occasional substitution of a "muff" for their minister—on Sunday.

Meantime, here he was in Mrs. Duncan's room, prepared to listen to her story.

"So good of you to come!" she exclaimed, rising to greet him, and extending both hands in the warmest way. He sat in silence upon the chair she rolled up for him, deposited his hat on the table, and waited for her to begin the conversation.

She was at small loss to do that.

"I have been waiting for three hours for you," said she, placing herself on a stool by his side, and looking up into his eyes. "You've been sitting there in that stupid parlor, along with all those people, and have never once thought of me. I passed the doors twice ; once on the piazza, once inside. Didn't you see me?"

"No," he said, dryly, "I didn't see you."

"Those people are very cool to me lately—I mean the Underhills—do you know why?"

"No," more dryly still, "I don't know why."

"Not that I care," she went on. "I have passed through too many trials to be much disturbed by so small a matter as this. It is my lot to be misjudged, wronged, persecuted."

Again! The "Here we are, Mr. Merryman" of the clown in the circus, was not more inevitable than Mrs. Duncan's cry of persecution.

The stern cast given to the features of her listener began as usual to melt into sympathetic graciousness under the tones of her soft voice.

"They have driven me away from the table, but I care little for that. I am happier in the seclusion of my own room, where I dine quite alone and solitary. I suppose you haven't noticed my absence; I am not necessary to your happiness. But it was not pleasant for me to sit at the table with the Underhills, since they have taken it into their heads to be cool. I think—to tell the truth—that Fay is jealous of me."

"Nothing of the kind, I assure you," Stuart said, stiffly. Yet the idea of one beautiful woman being jealous of another beautiful woman, and the jealousy of both beautiful women being caused by himself, was a thing that might have flattered a vainer man than Stuart Phelps.

"You must have dinner with me," said Mrs. Duncan, as Marcia opened the door and a colored man in a spotless white jacket and apron, bearing a huge tray laden a half a foot high with rich food of every description, entered the room.

"No, no," he said quickly, rising to his feet and taking up his hat.

"Yes, but you must," she insisted, loosening his fingers and placing his hat on the head of a

small marble Cupid which stood on the mantlepiece; her own property this, for the custom of decorating rooms with statuary is honored in the breach at Long Branch hotels. "I ordered dinner for you also, when I saw you were so late in coming."

She had ordered champagne also; the best brand in the house; and a bumper of it after the heavy mock-turtle soup was very grateful to the palate of Mr. Stuart Phelps. He had not touched a drop of wine of any sort, oh, he could scarcely remember when! Both his father and Mr. Underhill were strict "temperance men;" in fact, both families looked upon spirituous liquors as the abomination of abominations; and partly to please them, but principally because he could get on perfectly well without it—in fact, seldom thought of it—Stuart never took wine except when it was placed before him and urged upon him.

It was placed before him, and urged upon him now.

"Capital wine!" said he, as he held his bubbling glass up against the gas-light; for they had sat so long, first over the dinner proper, then over wine and nuts, that the twilight had come, and Marcia (who came and went continually from an inner bedroom) had drawn the blinds and lit the gas.

"When we have finished this bottle"—their second bottle of champagne, "I want you to taste some sherry I've got," said Mrs. Duncan. "Some

of my own, something such as no hotel like this ever furnished. I was ordered to take a table-spoonful of sherry three times a day to give me an appetite, and a friend of mine who is an importer of wines procured this for me. It is beautiful to look at! Just like liquid gold."

Stuart was in a far more humorous mood than when he came in.

"Gold is always a chimera," he attempted to sing, and broke down at it. "That's what the fellow in the opera sings, don't you remember? What is that opera? Oh yes, Robert the Devil. If I could sing as well as our friend, the German swine-slaughterer from Chicago, I'd give you that in fine style. By Jove, doesn't he play and sing well?"

"I don't care for his singing, nor his playing. I'd rather hear you talk for five minutes than hear him play the finest things he knows for an hour."

"Oh, you"—Cleopatra! he was actually going to say again. But he stopped, finished his glass, and added, "flatterer!"

"It isn't flattery, it's truth. When I want to hear music, I buy a ticket for concert or opera, and go deliberately and hear the best that's to be heard. I don't encourage these amateur people. They sit down at the piano and make themselves the centre of interest, and all conversation has got to stop while they are showing themselves off."

The matter being put in this light, Stuart began

to feel quite indignant at the German for having — on that very day—made himself the centre of interest, stopped the conversation, and showed himself off.

"I think you're right," said he, leaving the table and making himself comfortable on the deeply cushioned sofa, "quite right!"

"Marcia," called Mrs. Duncan, and the spectacled woman, with a stocking which she had evidently been engaged in darning stretched on her hand, appeared at the door of the inner room.

"Put the remains of this dessert outside the door," and as her servant obeyed her, she added, "and get out a bottle of my sherry; you know where it is."

"Yes, ma'am," said the woman, without looking either at her or her guest.

When Stuart's glass was filled, and Marcia had retired, and Mrs. Duncan had sat for some minutes by his side on the sofa, in what Stuart felt to be very suggestive silence, the lady started off on her long-promised story by saying:

"Stuart Phelps, if I had met you when I was sixteen I should never have married the man I did, and my life would not have been covered with gloom."

If one of the champagne bottles which Stuart had lately been engaged in emptying had begun of its own free will and accord to dance a hornpipe on the table, the young gentleman would have

gazed upon it with the same spirit of non-interference with which he now gazed upon Mrs. Duncan for the first time plainly avowing her love for him.

"Sixteen?" he said. "Where *was* I when you were sixteen?"

If all things were known—as they never are, either in romance or reality—it would have been seen that when Mrs. Duncan was sixteen, Stuart was eleven; and as he was a very immature boy at that age who got "kept in" at school almost every day for playing marbles in the street and being late, and in the very hour during which Mrs. Duncan was going through the marriage ceremony was actually standing with a fool's cap on his head for not knowing his grammar lesson, his desirability for the position of husband to anybody might well—if, as I said, all things had been known—have been doubted.

Mrs. Duncan made no answer to his question. How should *she* know where he was?

"And who was *he?*—your husband?" asked Stuart, sipping the sherry.

"He was a lawyer; Richard Duncan of San Francisco. I suppose you never heard of him. He was a splendid lawyer, and a very rich man. I was only a child when I married him—sixteen, as I said. He was forty-five. I was driven into the match by a cruel step-mother. Ah me!" she continued, "I have had a hard life. I may truly say I never knew what it was to have a moment's hap-

piness until I met you." She extended her hand towards him—pretty hand, with a number of sparkling rings on it—and placed it quietly in his own.

There was a moment's pause, in which Stuart's mind went off in a dreamy manner to Fay, wondering where she was, whether she were thinking of him, what she would think of him now, if she could see him. But, bah! it would soon be over, and then good-by to this. And when these reflections came to an end, the glass of sherry did likewise, and Mrs. Duncan filled it anew, with a bewitching smile.

"Is it possible he didn't love you, didn't treat you well?" asked Stuart, after she had re-seated herself by his side.

"Oh, he was a brute to me!" she cried, clasping her hands together, and raising her lovely violet eyes towards the ceiling, looking so beautiful, and so unhappy, that a mad thought flashed through the young man's brain: what if he should—kiss her! Would she scream? He felt quite sure she wouldn't. Meantime he kissed the rim of his wine-glass instead. It was very nice sherry.

"He nearly drove me wild," Mrs. Duncan went on. "Tortured me with jealousy, abused me when he was drunk, did everything to make life a torture, a burden, instead of what it should be, a blessing, a joy. I endured this fearful agony for eight years."

"What happened then?" asked Stuart.

"Oh, then," said Mrs. Duncan, stumbling strangely over so simple a statement, "he—he—died."

"Oh, he died," repeated Stuart.

There was again a pause, and when Mrs. Duncan raised her eyes she found those of Marcia, gleaming horribly through her spectacles—or so it seemed to the widow—and fixed on her glassily through the half-open door of the inner room.

"Want some more wine?" the grim woman asked in a hoarse voice.

"No. Shut the door. I'll call you when I want you," said the widow tartly.

When she had disappeared, Stuart said,

"Who *is* that woman?"

"Only my servant, as I have told you. But she is such an eccentric creature that she frightens me half to death sometimes. I often feel like discharging her, she is so odd. Still, she is very efficient; and sometimes I think she is attached to me."

"Who would not be?" he said, as much to his own astonishment as hers.

"Oh, Stuart!"

Kissed she was, whether by the sherry bottle or Stuart Phelps is not of much consequence—one had about as much sense as the other.

And so the half hours flew. When Stuart was taking his leave, which he did standing unsteadily for another half hour by the door, a renewal of the sherry kisses burst forth at each new promise;

and his promises were plentiful as lilacs in May—promises to love her, promises to give up Fay Underhill forever, promises to go with her to Europe, with her, Diana, at the earliest possible moment; promises—well, enough of this. When he left her, he stood committed to perform untold follies; and happy in her triumph over him, Mrs. Duncan let him go from her that night to stumble in his debased, befogged condition into more follies and further degradation.

CHAPTER X.

THE LESSON OF A NIGHT.

In the nearly deserted billiard room a game was progressing; and yet a game it could scarcely be called. Mr. Randolph Cabell was playing with the marker.

If Stuart Phelps had heard, or had had sense enough to comprehend what he heard, he would have comprehended and heard the Southerner saying again and again that he had not touched a billiard cue for years, and that never in his life had he been able—nor did he ever expect to be able—to master this scientific pastime. So frank a disclaimer of proficiency as this was enough to excuse

all blunders in the eyes of the one or two men who sat in high chairs leisurely observing, now the awkward misses of the handsome novice, now the skillful shots—little short of marvelous—of the professional player. Knowing well, of course, that the use of the tables would be paid for, the marker on several occasions made the gentleman who was for the nonce his pupil take his shots over and over till he succeeded in caroming; or indicated with pointed cue the direction in which it was necessary to send his ball in order to make a telling shot. So plainly was all this instruction, that scoring the points was not thought of on either side, except that when Mr. Cabell chanced to make a successful shot he would frolicsomely credit himself with forty or fifty points at a time. Any child might have understood how matters were; yet I trust you will not insult the mental capabilities of any child by comparing them to those of the be-sherried Stuart Phelps.

As soon as he entered the room this fine young gentleman cramped himself up in one of the high chairs against the wall in a distorted and absurd posture, and at the very first blunder of the young Southerner he burst into a loud laugh.

Cabell turned his head, and seeing that it was a new-comer, and moreover a gentleman whom he had seen sitting that very day with a party of ladies among whom was his wife's friend, Cornelia Cornwallis, he smiled also.

"I'm learning," he said. "Apt pupil, am I not?" and as he said this he missed another shot and sent his own ball off the table.

"Yes, I should think so," said Stuart, giggling idiotically.

Cabell continued to take his mirth very good-naturedly for some time. But as at every blunder he made Stuart's laugh grew louder and more insulting, Cabell's brow contracted, and his dark eye flashed.

"To make that carom, sir," said the marker, "you just strike your ball here, and that sends it—ah no! try that again." As he replaced the balls in the position they before stood Stuart's laugh rang out again, full of drunken derision. Cabell glanced over his shoulder at him, his lips curled with contempt; and Stuart, about to laugh again, was stopped by feeling a powerful grip on his knee. Sherry is a confusing beverage; and Stuart, who had heard the girls shriek in the water, and cry that crabs were biting their toes, clasped the bony fingers which caused him pain in the vicinity of his knee-cap, and said with a hiccup and a laugh, "How are you, crab?"

"If I wuz you," and it was the voice of Take Notice Wiggins which whispered loudly in his ear, and it was to N. B. Wiggins the bony fingers belonged, "if I wuz you I'd stop making an ass of myself, if I could. There ain't no occasion. He's all right. He ain't no player and he says so. And

it's nobody's business whether he is or not. You hain't no call to laugh at him any way, and I guess if you know when you're well off you'll keep your head shut."

To a series of brilliant shots by the marker the few on-lookers, including Cabell, gave applause; and Stuart clapped his hands as idiotically as he had laughed.

Then Cabell played again; and this time caromed nicely.

"That was a scratch, a scratch," stuttered Phelps, in a loud voice; "it don't count, I say! It was a scratch!" and he rose totteringly on the chair-round, and struck at the table with a cue he had taken from the rack at his side, but missing his aim hit Cabell on the knuckles of his left hand instead.

Before he knew why, Stuart was sprawling on the floor, where Randolph Cabell had indignantly flung him; then coolly paying the marker, the Southerner tossed a visiting card at N. B. Wiggins, whom he supposed to be Stuart's friend, and after lighting his cigar and assuring himself by a puff or two that it was well ablaze, he turned on his heel and sauntered out.

Wiggins picked up the card and twisted it in his fingers. "What did he leave his visiting card on me for? I never called on him! 'Randolph Cabell, Sunset-on-the-coast, Georgia,'" he read, and then gave a low whistle. "Say," he cried,

dragging Stuart to his feet. "You're in a pretty mess now. You're in for a duel, you are!"

CHAPTER XI.

A MODEL MANAGER.

Mr. N. B. Wiggins had enough to do, in successfully engineering his own affairs, without taking charge of other people's visiting cards for them. In fact, these same little bits of pasteboard had already caused him considerable annoyance of late. If there was one thing more than all others insufferable to Mr. Wiggins, it was to be outdone in anything he had undertaken. At Oshkosh he was known as one of the most energetic, most tireless, wideawake, public-spirited men in the place.

The thing in which Mr. Wiggins was now manifestly being outdone was in the matter of his polite attentions to Madame Pittaluga. Finding that it was "the cheese," as he expressed it, to send flowers to ladies at the Branch, that they might parade them as trophies on the dining tables at which they sat, N. B. betook himself to all the florists in the place, and ordered first from one and then from another, his choicest cullings. Paying roundly in greenbacks for this bit of gallantry, it

was annoying to see himself daily outstripped by the appearance on Madame Pittaluga's table of some floral structure which for size and beauty threw his own offering completely in the shade. The air was heavy with the fragrance of flowers about her table—their gracious forms fashioned every day in some new and quaint device; now a plain bed of roses in which Madame's monogram was traced in fragrant white flowers; now a ship, freighted with camelias, tuberoses, fuchsias, and who knows what besides?—now a beflowered parasol; now a harp; now a crown; the devices were endless; and upon each and every one was hung a visiting card, on which was inscribed with what Mr. Wiggins felt to be a truly nauseating sameness—"With the compliments of yours truly, Tony McDougall."

He had frequently asked Madame Pittaluga who this Tony McDougall was; and every time he did so she laconically replied, "He is a gentleman."

At Long Branch this naturally confined guessing to a narrow circle; and when Take Notice wondered whether it might be Stuart Phelps, or the Southerner, or the German, or old Mr. Underhill, or some one of a few others, the names of none of whom he knew, he was astonished, on drawing a chair up to that of Madame Pittaluga one morning, on the piazza, to find her talking to a good-looking enough man, costumed in the style generally known as "flashy"—a velvet coat, a scarlet necktie, an embroidered shirt, and a tall white hat with

a bit of crape about it—whom she presented to the astonished and disgusted Westerner as "Monsieur Tony McDougall."

"How's your nibbs?" said Mr. McDougall, holding out his hand, upon which, with so much other disdain of expenditure, one would have expected to see gloves; there was a diamond cluster ring instead.

A jelly-fish at its jelliest would have rendered as cordial a response to a grip as did Mr. Wiggins's hand to that of Tony McDougall. It has not been claimed for N. B. Wiggins, Esq., of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, that he was an Adonis, a Chesterfield, or a Beau Brummell; but he was a shrewd, honest man, who hated sham and had a sharply-defined idea of what constituted manliness, which was outraged in its plainest externals by the exaggerated style of costume affected by his new acquaintance. Indeed, Take Notice belonged to that large class of American men who hold the mistaken opinion that the slightest attention (beyond what is strictly necessary) to the subject of the toilet, is a thing too trivial and absurd for a thoughtful man. The consequence was that he clung, like most Western men of this way of thinking, to the ugly and ill-fitting suit of black broadcloth, worn on all occasions, and a soft black "slouch" hat, worn on nearly all occasions. This apparel was formerly another of the national characteristics. Now it has become more generally the badge of the Western man.

The sole concession to the prejudices of fashion which our friend made at the East was to wear a necktie—a superfluity of costume which it was his consistent custom to dispense with entirely, at home in Oshkosh.

It was strange that this practical, common-sensical man—angular in mind as well as in body, utilitarian in the greatest degree, knowing nothing of art, and much of lumber, considering the question of whether Oshkosh could get rolling stock on the railway when she wanted it as of far greater importance to the world at large than that Gounod had composed a new opera, or that Rossini was dead, should have taken so great a liking to the stout Italian woman, to whom art was not only a goddess whom her soul worshipped, but a good mother by whom her body was fed. But the great system of love going by contraries explained this, perhaps. Madame Pittaluga was suave, smooth, stout, well satisfied with herself and everybody else. Wiggins was sharp, all edges, thin, bony, restless, never satisfied with what he nor anybody else had done ; feeling the very seventh day of rest irksome, because it interfered with his driving go-aheadativeness ; the sort of man who built up this country, leveled the forest, drained ditches, fought Indians—an entirely new order of man from that which ever before existed ; a man seen in abundance in no other country but this, and a man raised up by God to make this recent

wilderness a habitable home for his kind. He was unmarried yet, never having had any time, he said, to go courting. In fact, his presence here at Long Branch could be traced directly to duties connected with business. He had been in New York, rushing about in the hot, crowded streets, sometimes with his coat off, but always vestless; and one day, panting with heat, he had jumped upon a Long Branch boat just as she was leaving the dock, intending to pass twenty-four hours by the seashore. He had met Madame Pittaluga; and *par consequent*, here he was still.

However, it was not the fact that he was here which now annoyed Mr. Wiggins; it was the fact that Mr. Tony McDougall was here—the man of the flowers and the visiting cards, with their formula exposing as much poverty of imagination as the daily offering seemed to show the reverse of poverty in his purse; a man clad in colors and forms offensive to the eye of the Oshkosh lumber merchant; a man evidently viewed with favor by the prima donna; a man who—yes, positively!—was chewing tobacco, while she complacently smiled, as if such a thing as objecting to the weed in its cud form had never entered her well-dressed head.

Finding that Mr. Wiggins was reticent in regard to the welfare of "his nibbs"—and it is just possible was not in possession of accurate information as to the nature of the same—Mr. Tony McDougall, feeling that the formality of introduction had

consumed quite enough valuable time, resumed his interrupted conversation with the prima donna.

"So you think you can go traveling with me? he asked of Pittaluga; and greatly to Wiggins's surprise, she answered,

"Yas, I tink so."

"I'll run you round the country fast," said Mr. McDougall; "and I think we'll both do big. I had Ole Rossa, the great violinist, last winter, and I showed him in sixty-two towns on consecutive nights, and we both made a pile. Had quizby biz in some towns, of course, but the season averaged well. You see, when I get on the road I ain't none of your kid-glove and gold-cane showmen. I pitch in then. Then's working-time, then is; when I come back to Ne' York then I feel like fixing up gay and doing considerable heavy loafing around. Not but what I haven't always got my eye open for attractive novelties. That's what made me try if I couldn't fix with you," and he gave the lady a seductive smile, to which she bobbed her head, by way of acknowledgment of his appreciation of her talents.

"So you're a theatrical performer, are you?" asked Wiggins, eyeing the specimen from head to foot.

"Well, no, cully, not a performer myself. I'm not that kind of a faker, though I can do most anything connected with the biz except face the footlights—that beats me. I tried it once—went

on as a supe in one of Ned Forrest's pieces ; that is, I did that fellow in Richard III. who has one line to speak, 'Stand back, my lord, and let the coffin pass!' Of course in the wings and green room they rigged me about the old slip before I went on. Well, you may send me South as a carpet-bagger if I didn't go right on and say it."

"Say what?" asked Wiggins.

"Why, I ups with my tin spear, and aims it at Forrest's left shoulder and roars out at the top of my voice : 'Stand back, my lord, and let the parson cough!'" When they had done laughing, he added, "Forrest was so mad he grabbed me by the nape of the neck, jabbed the spear into my back, kicked me all around the stage twice, threw me over into the orchestra, the leader pitched me back again, and Forrest finished the scene by jumping on me. It was rough, I tell you. After that, I quit the profesh."

"I suppose you make a good deal of money in your business," said Wiggins, who hadn't laughed so heartily for years.

"Make one season, get my duds stopped for debt the next," he answered, frankly. "Of course the great thing is to have a big attraction. Then you lay out your route, engage your halls two or three months ahead, avoiding big jumps, and trying to make your railroad connections so that you don't have no long stops in a town, but can just do it quick; bill 'em, hog 'em, and go."

"Bill 'em, hog 'em?" interrogated Wiggins.

"Yes; that is, your advance agent arrives before you and sets the paste brigade to billing the town; then you arrive with your attraction, give your show, hog the receipts and go."

"Oh, I see! I should think it ought to pay you well."

"Well it would, if there wasn't so many dead beats in the provincial towns."

"Dead beats in the towns! Well now, cur'-ously enough, that's a word I never heard used afore, 'cept to apply it to the showmen—not to the stay-to-home citizens of a town." Mr. Wiggins felt he was a little severe in saying this, but he spoke as one who defends the honor of Oshkosh, inferentially attacked by this charge of provincial dead-beatism.

"Well, it's about six of one and half a dozen of t'other," replied Mr. McDougall, with perfect good-nature. "Now, this is just the way the old thing works. I go into a town with my show. I pay the highest price for everything; printing, advertising, hauling trunks—in fact, every rascal in the town pounces down upon me as if he never saw a dollar before, and never expected to again. I order my ad. at big rates into the local news-paper; perhaps there ain't another live ad. in it; I treat the editor with as much respect as if he was Horace Greeley, James Gordon Bennett, and Henry J. Raymond rolled into one, and as if his

rag controlled the opinions of the world. I politely intimate that I would be obliged for a preliminary notice of the coming attraction; show him clippings from the New York press in which the parties are spoken of as first-class; he looks the notices over, contemptuously sticking up his nose as if he smelt his own devil, and half insinuating that a thing that the *New York Tribune* might be pleased with was in no way sure of meeting the approbation of the *Bucktown Blower*. Then he asks me if I don't want any printing done at his job office. Though I most always carry a quantity of pictorial printing with me, woodcuts, etc., besides such stuff as lithographs, window-cards, and photographs, I feel obliged to order several thousand small bills of him, which he charges three times New York prices for. Then he says I can leave him some tickets if I choose, his folks like to go to a show when it's good for anything. I ask him how many, and he counts up on his fingers—there's himself and his wife, and his four children, and his mother-in-law, and her second husband and, oh yes! there's a young lady from the country stopping with them—that makes, let's see—nine. I lay down nine tickets on his desk, and as I am going out he says perhaps I *had* better leave a couple more in case he might want to use them. In the street I meet my agent: 'Big license to pay here,' he says. 'Is that so? How much?' 'Twenty dollars.' I go and see if

I can't beg out of it. No go. As I am leaving they call out to me and say: 'You can leave tickets for the Common Council here.' At the hotel the landlord says he'd like a pass for himself and wife, if I'd just as lief. The bell-boys and the chambermaids beg for them too, and when I refuse they're mad and call me mean; say Nillson gave four-dollar-a-head tickets to everybody in the hotel from the landlord down to the porter, and then sent for the colored barber, shook hands with him, and asked him if he didn't want seats in the front row for himself and family. At night I get my doors open and wait for the crowd to arrive that is to cover the expenses I've been at, and leave me a surplus. The first man to arrive is the editor; he's used all the tickets and brought three more people whom he taps on the shoulder, nods confidently at me, shows them into the best seats, pushing the usher away, saying impatiently, 'It's all right!' Then the janitor comes and seats his wife. Then perhaps a paying party arrive—a man and a woman—and want to pass in a boy of fourteen with brass toes on his shoes free of charge, because they say he is only a child. Then another couple with a baby in arms; of course the baby don't pay anything, but it squalls through the whole performance. Then come the Common Council, each man with his wife. When I tell them their tickets were only to admit one, they get mad, make a noise, and say they'll see if they

can't take their wives in on those tickets. Then come all the scalawags in town, who swear they're printers, or they've run an errand for me or something. Then the sheriff and four policemen come; want to see if there's a bad character there; I say under my breath—'there is—a lot of them;' they say all right, then they'll make an arrest. They go in and sit down. At last the show's over, and I count up and find—well, look there," said Mr. McDougall, opening a note-book and pointing to some figures; "there's the record of one of the Ole Rossa nights. See if you can make it out."

"Expenses one hundred and ten dollars," read Wiggins.

"That's just local expenses—hall-rent, license, printing, advertising, bill-poster, hotel-bill, etc. It don't include what I guaranteed Mr. Rossa, which was a large weekly certainty and a share of the profits besides."

"Receipts ninety dollars, seventy-five cents."

"Including three counterfeit bills," added Mr. McDougall, lugubriously.

"Loss twenty, seventy-five," said Wiggins in a tone of some compassion; for such results were not altogether unknown even in so respectable a business as the lumber trade.

"But, you bet we gave them the Showman's Joy in that town," said Mr. McDougall with energy.

"What's that?"

"Don't you know what the Showman's Joy is?" asked McDougall, quite surprised. "Artemus Ward invented it. Why, you see, when a town treats you in the way that town treated us, giving us nothing of a house, and making you pay for the privilege of showing there, if you're too respectable to be fly-by-nights, you just take your revenge by giving them the Showman's Joy."

"Fly-by-nights?" repeated Madame Pittaluga, inquiringly.

"Yes, fly-by-nights—snappers, you know. When you've not made anything in a town, but lost, you just say to all folks that have got bills against you, 'All right, I'll see you in the morning; be at the hotel by 9.30 at the latest, for we go North on the 11 A.M. train.' Then when they get to the hotel in the morning they find you *non compos*, having got off on a freight-train in the night, or left before daybreak on an express which took you in a different direction from what they expected. But, that's a killing business, flying by night is. I used to do it when I traveled with a poor minstrel show, but it ruins your reputation and puts a stop to your making anything anywhere. But the Showman's Joy is no crime, and don't rob anybody of a dollar."

"You ain't told us what it is yet," said Wiggins.

"Why, when a town has acted so beastly mean

as that town did to us, the principal performer after the show is over and the audience gone, calls all the folks connected with him up on the stage, and gives every man of 'em a paper of chewin' tobacco and says 'Fire away, boys!' and with that every man begins to chew tobacco and spit all over the stage as hard as he can tear. I learned to chew tobacco for that very purpose." Mr. McDougall had certainly learned this fine art thoroughly; and Madame Pittaluga shuddered as he proceeded to give ocular proof of his proficiency.

"If you'll believe me, sir," continued Mr. McDougall, sublimely unconscious, and as indifferent as unconscious, of what effect he was making on his hearers, "we never struck a paying house till we left that line of road."

"That was strange," said Wiggins.

"But I found out the reason," said McDougall. "The next stand we made—a place said to be the best show town on that road—a prominent citizen walked up to me in the bar-room of the hotel—one of those prominent citizens who don't wear any shirt-collar, and look as if they slept in their overcoat—and after drinking most generously at my expense, said: "You would have had a good house here, sir—a large house, sir; in fact, I heard numbers say when they heard you were coming, that they guessed may be they would go if the price of tickets was not too high; the chances were favorable for your having a *big* house, sir, if

the weather had continued fine—but it will not—I see it is lowering, and our people will *not* turn out when it rains—*if*—I say *if*—the *Bucktown Blower* which is quite an authority here, and as many as a dozen copies taken weekly in our town—had not given you such an extremely unfavorable notice."

"Unfavorable!" said Madame, with quite a little shriek of surprise; "after all you had done for the editor?"

"That bla'guard of an editor," said Mr. McDougal, excitedly, "after I had paid him a printing and advertising bill of twenty-five dollars, given him eleven dead-head tickets, besides letting him pass three others; after he had condescendingly slapped me on the back as he went out, said 'First-rate,' and asked me where he should send his paper to me, had written and printed in his infernal rag this thing. Read it." From a capacious red-leather pocket-book, where it lay with a number of other clippings from newspapers, Mr. Tony McDougall took a flimsy bit of paper about as long as his forefinger and handed it to Wiggins, who read aloud as follows:

"OLE ROSSA.

"We attended the so-called concert of this much be-puffed humbug, and listened for a few minutes to the cat-gut caterwaulings he produced from his wheezy fiddle. A more outrageous humbug than this man we have never seen, as there is several persons in our town who can play the fiddle better than him. The pantaloons he wore fit him very bad, and our friend Mr. Shears of Main street says, he

will turn out anybody a pair for eight dollars that will take the shine off of them; if not he will take them back and refund the money to them. If this is the sort of thing that goes down in the Eastern cities why then all we can say is that their boasted civilization is a sham and that they had better come to Bucktown to acquire a true refinement.

"In conclusion we will add that the agent is one of those stuck-up fine fellows that parts their hair in the middle. We understand that the show goes from here to Kidville and we would say to our friends of that enterprising locality give it a wide berth as it is not worth listening to; much less paying the extortionate price of half a dollar to get in at."

"Well I must say," remarked Wiggins, handing back this valuable contribution to American newspaper literature, "if I was asked what 'pure cussedness' meant, I should give that editor's conduct as a sample. The man ought to be rode on a rail that'd print such a notice of Ole Rossa; one of the finest players I ever heard, and what's more, a gentleman, every inch of him."

"Shake!" cried McDougall, enthusiastically holding out his hand; "that's the talk! Well, what do you say now on the 'beat' question?—ain't it six o' one, and half—" here he broke off the thread of his discourse as a man approached bearing a small mountain of fragrant flowers, which he handed to Madame Pittaluga and withdrew. As usual, a visiting card was attached to the offering; Wiggins coolly picked it up, read it, and burst into a loud laugh as he repeated, "With the compliments of yours truly, Tony McDougall."

"All in the way of biz, cully," said Mr. McDougall in a low tone to Mr. Wiggins, as Madame Pittaluga received the basket with exclamations of pleasure.

Mr. Wiggins smiled a bland smile. He felt relieved.

"Well, Madame Pittaluga," said the showman, "if you *could* name your figure for one hundred nights—your very lowest figure, please—the country is showed to death this year."

While the lady was deliberating on this important question, Mr. Wiggins looked about for some excuse to leave them to talk over their business in private. The excuse was right to his hand. Stuart Phelps stood on the other end of the piazza, beckoning the lumber merchant to come speak with him.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY.

STUART had not been out of bed very long when he beckoned to Mr. Wiggins. He had awakened after a dull, senseless, drunken sleep, to find himself in his own bed, and with a feeling upon him as if he were recovering from a hard fever. When he attempted to rise, he found that his head was like lead, and that his whole internal economy seemed to be in a state of dire distress. "I've been sick," he whispered, "and I'm just recovering. I wonder how long I've been sick."

Turning over this problem in his mind, there came upon him by slow degrees the remembrance of the truth—and as this disgraceful knowledge dawned upon him he turned his face upon his pillow and groaned aloud. The pain in his head and the loathsome feeling in his stomach were trifling now, in comparison with the pain in his heart and the self-reproach that burned in his guilty conscience.

"I have been drunk!" he muttered, with a deathly shudder. "Drunk!"

Yes, he had been drunk! Stuart Phelps drunk!

The son of a man who stood so high in every sense, whose honor was unimpeachable, whose character for purity, generosity, not even calumny had ever dared assail; who had for thirty years braved the storms of business life in New York, and come out with a large fortune honestly earned, his reputation for probity unscathed; a man who daily snatched an hour, and braved the ridicule of the Paris-visiting club men by whom he was surrounded, to attend prayer-meetings at the old church in Fulton Street; who had reared this boy with tender care, faithfully inculcated in his breast every lesson of virtue, purity, probity, honor, temperance, he had himself so religiously learned—and this boy, the son of this man, had been drunk! drunk—besotted—a jabbering idiot, knocked over like a cur by a justly-incensed man in a billiard-room at midnight.

It was not alone the first time Stuart Phelps had ever been drunk; that almost "goes without saying," as the French express the "of course"-ness of such a case; but it was the very first time he had ever felt the power that lies in liquor. How many times had he read the words "It biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder," and always without having any more conception of their real meaning, than if it had been "It" does anything which Stuart had no more idea of "Its" doing to him, than he had of some poison walking out of a chemist's shop, and killing him. More than once

he had heard Gough lecture, and he wondered deeply that any man could race around a platform, and twist his hands above his head to cast off the gyves of an imaginary liquor-thraldom, and make his coat-tails fly in the air, as he feigned to escape from the hoofs of a supposititious Death on the Pale Horse constructed from galloping quarts of old Rye and Superior Bourbon. At dinners—not at home, nor at Mr. Underhill's, for at neither house was it ever served—but elsewhere, he occasionally took wine ; if it was red wine, no matter how choice the quality, he just turned it into a large goblet, and filled it to the brim with water, which left it not strength enough to harm a baby—and *de l'eau rougie* like this is constantly given to babies in France, where drunkenness is rarely seen, certainly never among babies, and seldom among men. On New Year's day, he made it a point never to take wine anywhere ; the reason was obvious ; refusing everywhere, he knew he could not overstep the limit of human capability in the drinking regard, as many men did. And in truth, he did not care for wine ; the only wine he had ever drank that really tickled his palate, and made him long for more, was that of which he had partaken in Mrs. Duncan's room.

Mrs. Duncan !

" I hate her ! " cried the humiliated soul, beating his head with his hands, " I hate her ! It was she who brought me to this. I'll never see her again ! "

And if he had kept his word, his part of the story might end here.

"I'll go to my Fay," he said, "my darling girl! *She* never would have given me wine till I was drunk—never!"

With this resolution he got out of bed, determined to make his toilet speedily, and carry his resolve into instant execution. But his trembling limbs refused to hold him, and with a sea-sick whirl he pitched headlong upon his bed again, groaning, disgusted, hating himself and existence.

Then he dropped off into a ghastly doze, and when he again awoke, it was past noon. Once more he essayed to dress, and after the lapse of an hour—a miserable, unhappy hour—he finally completed his toilet, and went creeping downstairs with haggard face, and his wet hair dripping cologne.

As he passed the clerk's office, he saw a letter in his box. When the clerk gave it to him, he walked outside, and tore off the end of the envelope abstractedly:

It was from Fay.

"Dearest Stuart," it said: "Where in the world did you betake yourself all the evening? I was so dull without you; but no matter, if you amuse yourself in going off like that, I'm not going to tell you how I miss you. We are going to Philadelphia with Cornelia Cornwallis to-day, on the morning train. Papa has business which calls him there, and mamma thought we might as well go

on, and perhaps not return to the Branch at all. She is tired of it and wants to get home. We shall not stay in Philadelphia more than a day or two. Of course you'll return to New York at once, now we're gone. So good-by for the present, my dear, darling, *good* Stuart! You might call Thursday evening at the house in town. I think we'll be home then. Ever your own FAY."

He fairly moaned aloud, when he found that the sweet young girl—his protectress, his guardian angel—was gone. His first thought was to go back to town himself on the three o'clock train. He looked at his watch. It was now two. Should he try to catch that? A number of people were walking about ready to go; their trunks down, and their shawls strapped up. Girls were kissing each other promiscuously; some promising to write, others to see each other in town. "You can make out my bill, please," called Stuart, over the heads of half a dozen men, some of them family men, in the making out of whose accounts the clerk was obliged to hunt up their laundry charges, and their livery, and their wine, and their meals to room, and other extras. "Make out my bill, I say," cried Stuart again; "I'm going on this train." But the clerk never so much as looked at him.

"I can go on another train just as well," thought he, and sauntered out on the piazza and sat down again. The 'bus drew up to take people to the depot, and Stuart pulled out his watch again, but for-

got to look at the time—for in pulling out his watch a visiting card fell from the pocket of his vest, where N. B. Wiggins had slipped it the night before, and picking it up Stuart Phelps read, "Mr. Randolph Cabell, Sunset-on-the-coast, Georgia."

Instantly, like a flash, there rang in his brain the words which Wiggins had uttered in his drunken ears the night before—it was like the tune frozen in the trumpet, of which Münchhausen tells. He had not heard them then—now they rang out shrill as a clarion's notes. "You're in for a duel, you are." Of course, of course. Even the matter-of-fact Wiggins had seen it. The Southerner had knocked him down, and flung his card at him; that meant either that he, Cabell, was to challenge him, Phelps, or that he, Phelps, was expected by Cabell to challenge him, Randolph Cabell, of Sunset-on-the-coast, Georgia. Rising excitedly from his chair, Stuart walked to the end of the piazza, and seeing there seated the man he most wished to speak to, beckoned Wiggins, half-imperatively, half-imploringly.

When Take Notice approached young Phelps and observed the improvement that clean linen, scrupulous shaving, general tidiness, and it may be added, sobriety, had effected in the staggering, unbuttoned creature with tumbled hair and fœtid breath, who had disgraced himself last night in the billiard room, his thin lips expanded into a grin worthy of a goblin, and hooking his bony arm in

Stuart's he led the young man far out on the lawn, so as to be sure of not being within earshot of Madame and the showman, and then he said in a dry voice :

"You feel some better than you did last night, I guess, don't you ?"

"In one respect I do, in another I do not, Mr. ——will you please tell me your name ?"

"N. B. Wiggins, Oshkosh, Wisconsin," said Take Notice, gazing with steel-blue eyes on the steel-blue sea.

"Mr. Oshkosh—I mean Mr. Wiggins," said Stuart, confusedly, "do you think I shall be challenged by that man who knocked me over last night ?"

This was a day of fun for Wiggins. The showman had given him two or three hearty laughs in relating his experiences, and now here was a man at Long Branch in the year 187– asking the matter-of-fact lumberman from the Lakes whether he thought he would have to fight a duel! He laughed so loud that the people came to the windows of the hotel to see who it was enjoying himself so greatly and what the fun was ; observing which Mr. Wiggins pulled a face that would have done credit to the toothache, and even looked down the beach and shook his head lugubriously as if to say : The man who was so thoughtless as to laugh in the manner you heard went into the sea to bathe and has since been drowned for his frivolity.

"I don't see what there is to laugh at," said Stuart, piqued at the reception of his question; "you said yourself I was in for a duel."

"My sakes! You don't mean to say you wuz sober enough to understand that! If I'd thought you wuz sober enough to understand it I wouldn't a said it."

Sober enough to understand! Bitter, humiliating words for Stuart Phelps to hear! He thanked God his father was not there to hear them. And he would never give any one cause to utter such words again—of that he was fully sure.

"Don't you think it is my duty as a man, as a Christian, to go to that gentleman and apologize for having insulted him so grossly last night?"

"Well," said Take Notice, drawling out the well until it was almost long enough to make a river, "if you can make up your mind to do it, I expect it would be the correct thing. I don't say that I could ask a man's pardon right square out that way. I'd try to do him a good turn somehow, and kind o' fix it up so."

"It's very difficult to fix up a thing of this sort," said Stuart with a sigh.

"Yes, it is," said Wiggins, "but it's a mercy it was no worse. I tell you I was thankful neither of you drew a pistol. I was looking every minute to see you whip out a revolver from under your coat-tails."

"I never carried such a thing in my life," said Stuart with disgust.

"It's a blessing you hadn't one last night, for you were drunk enough to use it." Stuart shuddered. "And it's a blessing he hadn't either. He was mad enough, I tell you. But you wuz awful tantalizing, I must say. I don't see but what you stand about square—you hit him with a cue, he knocked you over the snout."

"Sir!" said Stuart, drawing himself up to defend his nose's dignity. "It is unnecessary to compare me to a hog, Mr. Wiggins."

"That's so—hogs don't get drunk."

Stuart was on the point of replying, "They would, if they'd had such sherry," in the mad spirit of buffoonery that sometimes seizes people with peculiar power on very grave occasions; but he refrained, and said instead, very humbly, "I'm much obliged to you for your kindness to me, Mr. Wiggins."

Take Notice, who in reality had a heart as soft as a woman's, was one of those self-contained natures who are not given to expressing their emotions in the way of sympathy and kind feeling. This being the case, although he felt so kindly toward the young man that a similar state of feeling, if he had been a woman, would have been the kissing point, he continued to look as black as the proverbial thunder-cloud, rasping his thin hand over his chin, snapping his eyes at the sea, and not

responding by so much as a single word to Stuart's continued outpourings of gratitude, self-abasement and contrition almost tearful.

"I'll see you again, Mr. Wiggins," said Stuart, laying his hand on the Westerner's bony shoulder, "and if I meet Mr. Cabell I'll ask his pardon, I give you my word I will."

He walked away, leaving Wiggins on the lawn, and at the hotel door he met the Southerner face to face. Stuart was so startled at this unexpected encounter, that for a moment he scarcely remembered what he had planned to do. In an instant Cabell had passed by, leaving behind him a look of scorn and disgust for the drunkard who had struck him with a cue, which made Stuart's blood tingle.

Turning suddenly he called after him.

"Mr. Cabell."

The Southerner wheeled towards him, pale as death, but with resolution written on every feature.

Stuart raised his hat and said, "Mr. Cabell, I hope you'll be good enough to accept my apology for my stupid and insolent behavior of last night. I was not myself, as you saw; and it is the first time such a disgraceful thing ever happened to me. I sincerely regret it all, I assure you."

Instantly the Southerner's face lighted up with a warm glow.

"I accept your apology, sir, with all my heart. I was quite as much to blame as yourself."

"No, you were not," said Stuart, stoutly.

They shook hands, while Stuart's eyes grew bright with something like the moisture of tears. They were not an unmanly showing either, believe me. They were the offspring of shame and gratitude, joy for a happy escape from degradation, sorrow at having been even for one hour degraded, with the strong, bright, hopeful current of youth rushing beneath.

They walked outside together; and fell to chatting pleasantly. In half an hour it was surprising what a marvelously fine fellow each thought the other.

While they were talking, a man wearing a style of dress which Stuart thought more noticeable for its pronounced character than for its fine taste, asked for a light. Striking the ashes from the end of his cigar, Stuart gave it; and with a "thanks!" worthy of a king in a tragedy, Tony McDougall returned the fragrant Havana; and then leaning against one of the pillars of the balcony the theatrical speculator stood near them, puffing in silence.

Groups of ladies passed and re-passed; some walking briskly with locked arms up and down the piazza's sweep; others lounging along heavily as if walking at any pace were torture, but rapid walking an impossibility: with the healthful air from the blue sea blowing into faces often—too often—pale and worn and tired; pale, from constitutions al-

ready fragile at birth—the work of tight-lacing, ball-giving mothers, unwilling to shut out society for a whole year for the sake of a mere nobody not yet arrived, and of no possible importance in the *beau monde;* worn and tired—by these very nobodies—who managed to arrive somehow, and to struggle up to womanhood, such as it was.

Happily, all are not like this. Some are blooming as a rose new-blown; their eyes beaming with healthful sparkle, the dew of the morning on lips ruby-red, hair floating in the breeze. Children, too, scamper along, some trundling hoops, others playing "tag" and using, without so much as "by your leave" the knees and backs of Stuart and Cabell, and even the legs of Tony McDougall as legitimate hiding-places from the tag-antagonist. They seem like different creatures, here enjoying their frank fun which none but a churl would grudge them or interfere with, to the insufferably insolent miniature men and women who at night invade the parlors in their absurd finery and wrangle about places in the dance. For every night this sorry farce is enacted; and most of the *habitués* of the hotel never enter the parlor of an evening now, but sit outside on the piazza and look through the windows at the monotonous comedy and confess that the actors are well up in their parts.

Yet here by daylight in honest childish games one cannot help admiring the young creatures, and giving them God-speed in what diversion they may

now enjoy, with a sigh for those sorrows the grim sybil Fate is weaving in her web to throw across their bright paths when the dark moment arrives. With a little observation one learns that most of the children are sweet and lovely in spite of what appears. There are a few incorrigible ringleaders in badness who sometimes turn the whole drove of lambs into howling wolves; you soon are able to distinguish these; and find, of course, that they are encouraged in their offensive behavior, by weak, idolizing and ill-bred parents. These few—half a dozen at the outside—not the most incorrigible child-lover could endure. Nothing but translation to another sphere would make them tolerable, one would say. But there are others who are pictures to the eye and music to the ear. Hear that peal of rippling laughter from that group of girls, as one among their number flies with a speed like heel-winged Mercury, but trips against stupid old Mrs. Barham's dress and is caught, panting like the hart! One little soul, a five-year-old boy, with hair *blond d'ange*, eyes of the same hue as heaven, painted with the same brush, skin like lily petals, of alabaster translucence, blue veins seen beneath —an excruciatingly funny little chap, daily uttering enough "Another from our five-year-old's" to fill a score of Harper's Drawers! What wild prank is he on now, tearing up and down the piazza with his hands in his pockets, laughing like mad, and yelling at intervals at the top of his voice, "I've

got on pants! I've got on pants!" His ladylike mother—fair like himself, round as an apple, short, heavily-built, and enviably healthful, laughingly explains. The bifurcated garment, badge of proud sexhood, is by him donned now for the first time, they observe with what triumphant joy; but she means him to return for yet a while to petticoats, if she can compass this end without injury to life or limb, her own or his.

Pony Parsons, fresh as a young colt, trots along on springy ankles, the German at her side. They bow to Stuart, laughing at nothing, but youth and lightness of heart. Stuart lifts his hat and Cabell follows suit—the bit of etiquette which bids a gentleman bow to his companion's friend though all unknown to himself. Some one catches the German by the arm, wheels him around, and asks him if he is having a good time.

"You bet I vas!" answers Kalbfleisch, and then recognizing the speaker he cries, "Vy, Boyd, how you vas? Ven you leafe Chigago? Pretty hot dere now—not?"

"Do you suppose that fellow is really a Turk?" asked Cabell of Stuart as the group with pealing laughter moved on.

"Who, Kalbfleisch? Why no, he's a German, and a first-rate fellow too."

"No, no. I mean that man who is selling trinkets to the ladies there." He pointed to a slender, swarthy-complexioned man who daily

came—no one knew from whence—and spread some curious wares upon the piazza, where he found frequent purchasers among the ladies and children. His costume consisted of light blue-cloth breeches trimmed with gold braid, their great fullness gathered at the knee; white stockings, low shoes; a scarlet jacket richly embroidered, a bright silk scarf tied about his waist, and his long black hair surmounted by a scarlet fez. His wares were little Moorish articles, jewelry, African *burnous*, quaint cups with old designs, curious foreign fans, with the addition of such homely and familiar articles as small wooden spades and pails of native manufacture—Jersey, perhaps—and pictured story-books marked "price six-pence," printed in London, and sold here for twenty-five cents and half a dollar.

"Oh, that fellow!" said Stuart, laughing. "I believe he professes to be an Algerian. A couple of them have got a place in Broadway, or had; it may have burst up. They may be Paddies, for all I know. It's easy enough to hire such a costume as that. I wore one very similar to it at a masquerade ball last winter."

"I like to see him there," said Cabell. "His costume gives just the touch of the picturesque that was needed, to this scene."

Another group of ladies passed, and directly behind them came a beautiful, bright face, wreathed in bewitching smiles the moment the

violet eyes fell on Stuart. He felt a shiver of anger, indignation, disgust shoot through his heart.

Mrs. Duncan advanced smilingly, and bowed to him with marked pleasure and admiration.

With a manner quite as unmistakable as hers but in the directly opposite intention he stared in her face with cold disdain; then, without the least inclination of his head, turned his eyes away.

The Southerner was amazed. He found it difficult to understand how a gentleman could treat a lady thus. In fact, the scene was so very peculiar that it startled Tony McDougall into speaking.

"What!" exclaimed the theatrical speculator, as with flushed cheeks and flashing eyes Mrs. Duncan passed on; "you cut the 'Frisco widow! Ain't you afraid she'll shoot you?"

CHAPTER XIII.

A BIT OF HISTORY.

STUART threw his cigar away with a long sweep of the arm.

Then he arose, and saying to Cabell, "Will you be good enough to excuse me?" to which a touch of the hat was an all-sufficient reply, he turned to Tony McDougall.

"Let me have a minute's talk with you, will you?"

"To be certainly of course," said Mr. McDougall.

They walked off together, along the pathway by the summer-houses.

"Are you acquainted with Mrs. Duncan?" asked Stuart.

"No, I can't say I am exactly, cully," was Tony McDougall's answer.

"My name is Phelps, not Cully," said Stuart. "I don't see how you could have formed the idea that it was Cully."

"Oh, never mind *me*," said the showman. "I'm as harmless as a dove. But I've seen the widow before."

"You spoke in so positive a tone concerning her that I thought surely you must have known her."

"Well, I tell you," said Tony, perching his hat forward on his nose to ward off a dying sunbeam; "the fact is, I've been in 'Frisco—went there with the Chattacarettes—you know the Chattacarettes, don't you?"

"No, I have not the honor of their acquaintance," said Stuart.

"They're acrobats; father, mother, two sons, three daughters, their husbands and wives, and six grandchildren."

"A numerous party. Were they all acrobats?" asked Stuart, interested in spite of himself—being a frequenter of gymnasiums and fond of these graceful feats of strength.

"Yes, all of them. The father and mother, they danced the tightrope with and without the aid of the balance pole; the sons and daughters did the trapeze act and the revolving globes, and the little midgets did carpet postures and summersaults."

"But, about Mrs. Duncan?" said Stuart.

"Yes, I'm a coming to her. You see the Chattacarettes promised to be a big thing. But, such luck! The first night the old woman fell off the tightrope and lamed her back; the next night the young man Julian tumbled from the trapeze head downwards into the orchestra; two nights after-

wards four of the children was laid up with the measles; then their father got low-spirited and went on a big drunk, and the agent had his periodical epileptic fits. So I threw up the engagement."

"I don't wonder," said Stuart, half amused and half sympathetic. "And it was while in San Francisco with this party that you saw Mrs. Duncan?"

"Yes, I saw her frequently. She was mighty gay. She seems kind o' quieted down now. She used to be at one theatre or another every night. She was the wife of a leading man there. In the daytime she generally had a fast team and drove out to the Cliff House. The general opinion appeared to be that she'd pull a trigger mighty quick on anybody that insulted her. *I* never insulted her, you bet!"

"I suppose I have done so," said Stuart, curtly.

"Well, it looks like it, cully. I wouldn't stand in your clogs not for no small amount of money. You see them 'Frisco folks ain't like they are here. If they get mad at you, they don't go to shooting off their mouths like a lot of hamfatters, they just make you eat lead."

In this cheerful strain Mr. McDougall continued for some time, the two men meanwhile walking up the shore road. When they were opposite a restaurant which stands about midway on the beach, "Won't you come in and have a little poison?" asked Mr. McDougall.

"No, thank you. I—I never drink—that is, I never desire to drink. Excuse my leaving you so abruptly. It is growing dark. Here's a 'bus coming, it will take me back to the hotel."

Tony touched his hat in as near the manner Cabell had done as he was able to imitate thus unexpectedly; and Stuart, stepping into the omnibus, was driven rapidly to the hotel.

Stuart had made up his mind to leave the Branch the next morning. Since sunset a cold wind had sprung up and people were shivering along by the bleak shore as if the almanacs had turned several leaves at once and thus sent people by mistake from September to January. For days past the crowds had been thinning; and very likely in a week to come there would remain hardly a trace of the gay throngs who had wandered along these roads in the soft moonlight, disported themselves in the dashing sea at morning, flirted on the piazzas at noon, hopped in the parlors at night.

The first person Stuart jostled against in the office was Cabell. "You seem in a hurry," said Stuart, smiling, as their elbows came into violent collision.

"Yes; my wife wants to go by the early morning train, and I am getting my things together."

It was like an epidemic. Everybody was going. It seemed as if to-morrow the enormous house would be completely depopulated—there where a week before beds had been made in hall-ways, and

the ghastly parlor had had after midnight the look of a hospital. In vain hotel proprietors wandered about among the guests asserting with an assurance born of great knowledge or greater hope that this was only a cold snap, and that in twenty-four hours the heat would be greater than ever. No use. The seashore was doomed for that season. The city in its fashionable quarters had been likened to a Necropolis by topic-lacking writers for the press; now the Necropolis was building by the sea, and the city, "like Richard," said the topic-lacking writers, "is itself again."

In one of the rooms where preparations for departure were going on, were two women whom we know; one walking the floor with agitated footsteps and talking rapidly to her companion, the spectacled woman who was kneeling on the floor packing trunks.

"Marcia," said Mrs. Duncan, suddenly sitting, and drawing her chair close to her companion, "what would you do if a man were to insult you?"

"That depends," said Marcia, stopping her work and looking into the eager, handsome, violet eyes she knew so well, "it depends on who the man was, and what sort of an insult it was."

"Which are both things I don't care to tell you," said Mrs. Duncan, rising impatiently. "As usual, I am without advice, without help in every situation I find myself."

"You couldn't expect a person to advise you

without knowing some of the circumstances," said the woman, quietly resuming her work.

"I am very unreasonable, I suppose, as usual."

"Yes, as usual."

There was silence after this, during which the sounds of packing were heard incessantly. Mrs. Duncan paid little or no attention to them until the rattle of paper caught her ear.

"What's that?" she said, turning quickly from the window out of which she had been looking.

"Here is a letter I found in the pocket of your black dress," answered Marcia, holding up a crumpled sheet of paper.

"Give it to me," cried the widow. "I would not have any one see this letter," said she, clutching it tightly, "for worlds."

"Why don't you burn it up then?" asked Marcia with an imperturbable face, utterly without expression of any kind.

"Why don't you ask questions about matters that don't concern you?" snapped out Mrs. Duncan, who was in a most unenviable ill-temper this evening.

Marcia smiled a grim smile, with her back to her mistress—who fell to reading the oft-read letter again, as if it fascinated her. And again its reading seemed to awaken scorn, hatred, disgust, and stifled fury.

"I could kill you!" she hissed, between her teeth.

"Me?" inquired Marcia, quietly looking up from her work.

"The writer of this letter," explained her mistress with a gloomy brow. "Not but what I sometimes feel as if I could kill you too—you and myself and all the world."

"The easiest way to settle the matter," said Marcia, with a grim attempt at humor, "would be to kill the person who has put you in such a bad temper."

Mrs. Duncan rose to her feet and stood staring at her attendant with a face which grew paler and paler, until it was at last like the face of a phantom; but her eyes were ablaze with fury.

CHAPTER XIV.

PONY TAKES THE BIT IN HER MOUTH.

THE event which led Cornelia Cornwallis to return to Philadelphia was the celebration, by a *soirée intime*, of her birthday. The anniversary fell, somewhat to her annoyance, at that period of the year when almost all of the fashionable set to which she belonged were still out of town. Notwithstanding this, it was not often she was troubled by unpleasantly hot weather at her birthday party; for the first week in September generally sees the

beginning of that delicious season of soft hazy days and cool breezeless evenings, which lasts sometimes till the very beginning of December; is peculiar to America; and is sent, it is fair to believe, as a recompense for those fierce snow-storms, and for those killing, maddening heats which, at their allotted season, make life a torture.

With the most of her set out of town, Cornelia Cornwallis always had some difficulty in getting together enough people to give a *soirée*—even the most *intime*. In the winter, all of Philadelphia's best, *s'arrachaient*—literally rent itself—in its efforts to obtain invitations to the Cornwallis *soirées*. And if, even at this season, Cornelia had been willing to allow her inflexible line of demarcation to waver in never so little, she might have had her parlors filled, in the first week of September, with a crowd of amiable persons, as well-dressed, as well-mannered, as rich and as entertaining as those who later in the year, moved through the gorgeous *salons* of the superb mansion, in their various forms of youth and beauty, age and ugliness, wealth or poverty, virtue or vice. But no; Cornelia was as adamant on this point. She conceded the various good qualities claimed for the people proposed as candidates for invitations to her *soirée;* they were well-dressed (yes, certainly; better dressed than many who were seen and cordially received in the Cornwallis parlors; better dressed than her Aunt Cornelia, who

was an undeniable fright, wore an old-fashioned scratch, carried a reticule, was worth a million and spent half the year with her relatives, the Duke and Duchess of Collonie in England); they had good manners, these worthy candidates, Cornelia admitted it—money, fine houses, carriages, et cetera; *but*—fatal monosyllable! they were not the *ton*.

Fay Underhill generally went to all Cornelia's parties. These girls, who never earned a penny in their lives, and to whom money and time were but vehicles provided for their enjoyment, thought scarcely more of a trip between New York and Philadelphia, than you or I would of one in a stage between Union Square and the Battery. Nothing was more common than for Fay to telegraph Cornelia in the morning, "Come over for this evening; Stuart and a few others;" or for Cornelia to telegraph to Fay, "Box opera Traviata to-night, come," and either Fay or Cornelia as the case might be, accompanied by a maid, would get seats in a drawing-room car, and after a three hours' ride, arrive in immaculate and untumbled attire, at the other's abode.

On the strength of her eminent father's eminence, Pony Parsons got invitations to the Cornwallis parties, though more than once Cornelia had said to her plainly, "Miss Parsons, if you continue to be such extremely bad form, I shall cease sending you invitations to my parties."

"No matter," said Pony, with a laugh like a colt's whinny; "I'll come without."

Cornelia had invited Pony quite cordially at the Branch to come to her birthday party; and as soon as she had done so, Pony asked her to invite Hermann Kalbfleisch.

"Oh, I couldn't think of such a thing!" ejaculated Cornelia.

"Why not?" asked Pony, viciously.

"Because I don't know anything about him."

"Well, I like that! You've talked with him, laughed with him, played croquet with him, and listened to his music by the hour."

"That's not knowing him. I might be even more intimate with him than that at a watering-place, and yet ignore him in town."

"Kind!" was Pony's sneering comment.

"*C'est comme çela*," returned Cornelia, coolly.

"Why, he was presented to you by Stuart Phelps," urged Pony

"Stuart Phelps only met him here; and besides, Stuart Phelps is not a person to feel the great importance of caution in this regard. If it were Mr. Phelps, Stuart's father, who had presented him, I should feel differently."

"I guess old Mr. Phelps has got something better to do than to go around hunting up men's pedigrees and presenting them to you," said Pony, with a pout.

"To present men or pedigrees to me is a ser-

vice I shall never require either of young or old Mr. Phelps," replied the imperturbable Miss Cornwallis.

"Why, look here," cried Pony, impetuously, determined to get her German friend invited to the splendid house if she could, both for her pleasure and for his; "Mrs. Barham is his cousin, and she says he's a baron or something."

"The 'something' is well put, Pony," replied Cornelia, with a smile. "That ridiculous old Barham says he is a baron; *he* says his father was a vine-planter on the Rhine. Which is the more likely to be right? And, besides, who is Barham herself?"

"When she's dressed," added Pony, with a laugh.

"Dressed or undressed," said Cornelia stiffly, "she is always an old humbug, who is forever pretending she's got blue blood, when all she's got in reality is greenbacks. She's rich; *ergo*, she gets into society in New York—*çela va sans dire*. I've got nothing to say against it. But that isn't enough for Philadelphia; and I'm told that in Boston nobody whatever notices her."

That was the end of the conversation; and if anything was, or should have been, clearly understood, it was that Hermann Kalbfleisch was *not* invited to Miss Cornwallis's birthday party.

Now, on the afternoon when Stuart and Cabell sat on the piazza together, and Fay Underhill and

Cornelia Cornwallis, accompanied by parents and guardians, had gone to Philadelphia, Pony and Kalbfleisch were prancing about, in the parlor and out, on the piazza and off, to the beach and back, here and there, everywhere and nowhere, as full of youth and spirits as any two mortals who ever passed through this vale of tears.

When at length, fairly tired out, they ran into the parlor and sat down on a sofa with a thump as if springs were born, not made, and bloomed perennially for the benefit of watering-place hotels, Pony found courage to tell Hermann that she was to leave the Branch to-morrow, not to return.

Kalbfleisch's face fell.

"You go avay?" he said, looking down at the carpet very soberly.

"Yes, I must; I have to," said Pony. "Must pull up somewhere; can't drive forever round and round this course; got to turn her nose homewards sometime."

"But vat vor you go to-morrow so quick? You kin stay a little longer. Not?"

"No, I can't; because the day after to-morrow is Cornelia Cornwallis's party, and—"

"Miss Gornwallis she gif a barty?" asked the German.

"Yes; in celebration of her birthday. Oh, she's young, Cornelia is. You can tell by her teeth."

Hermann looked at her fixedly.

"I vish I could come to dot barty."

Pony afterward declared that "it said itself." "It" took her little mouth and "it" put it close to his pink ear and "it said itself," right down into the interior workings of his auricular organs, "Come along!"

"But she didn't invite me," said Hermann.

"There are no set invitations out," said this naughty Pony, falteringly. "It's just a little party —a *soirée intime*. I think she meant you to come," she added, with a gulp, as if she were swallowing something very hard.

The truthful, conscientious Pony to fib! What must the temptation have been!

"Doos you really?" said he. "I vish I vas sure of dat. Den I goes mighty quick. I like to go so to be mit you; and you like to have me?" he inquired in a very lover-like whisper—"Not?"

Pony afterwards said, in explaining that "it said itself," that she had always seen the force of the remark, that one might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. Acting on this principle, she now burst out boldly with the astonishing asseveration that Cornelia had talked particularly with her, Pony, about his, Kalbfleisch's, coming to her party; that she had no doubt at all that Cornelia would on no account allow him, Kalbfleisch, to entertain the idea of failing to come; and she was convinced that the happiness of her, Cornelia's, whole life depended on the presence of him, Hermann, on

this particular birthday and at this particular *soirée intime*.

And, as a consequence, the coffers of the company running railway cars to Philadelphia received the next day the fares of Pony Parsons, father, mother and maid; and were further enriched by the price of a ticket for one first-class passage bought and paid for by Mr. Hermann Kalbfleisch, of Chicago.

CHAPTER XV.

FISHING FOR A TITLE.

THE Cornwallis mansion in Philadelphia was on an aristocratic street running from river to river; it stood on a corner, and ran back many feet on a side street, and this side street was one of the Twenties—high "up-town" indeed for Philadelphia. The house was built of creamy yellow stone, and had Corinthian pillars in front. A broad lawn, carefully tended, beautified with flower-beds and fountains, spread itself out before the long windows, opening to the ground, of the lower story. Outside, the Cornwallis house was comfortable looking, even handsome; inside it was more—it was gorgeous.

If the fortunes of the Cornwallis family had been

in any degree impaired by the war, then it can only be supposed that this house had been furnished before that period; for lavish expenditure—not reckless expenditure, because everything was intrinsically valuable—but that expenditure whose guide is taste, and fitness, and beauty, and these alone, had gathered these statues, hung these pictures, chosen this admirable furniture, these countless *objets d'art*, which surprised you into admiration at every turn.

On entering the house you found yourself in a wide hall, at whose remote end stretched away a staircase regally broad, with steps hardly taller than the length of a lady's finger. To the right and left, off the hall—itself furnished with marble columns, rich carpets, and carved oaken furniture of evident antiquity—noble *salons* ran the entire length of the house; this, the drawing-room, gorgeous in yellow satin and gold; opposite, on the side street, the picture-gallery, lit only from the ceiling; at back the great dining-hall, whose height was that of the entire house—no rooms above it, a true baronial hall, hung with family portraits; with at one end a gallery for musicians, and at the other one of the finest conservatories in the city, whose buds and blossoms were constantly admired through their walls of glass by the passers-by on that street which is among the Twenties. Above stairs was a dark, richly furnished library, with bookcases built in the walls and reaching from

floor to ceiling; and next this was Cornelia's tiny boudoir, hung with blue satin and silver, and not a single antique thing in it, but all new and sparkling and bright, fresh from an upholsterer's hands —let Cornelia grumble at their altered fortunes as she might—at least once in every two years. And all these rooms and others were thrown open, and a dozen servants were moving busily about for the *soirée intime*, which Cornelia had calculated would not number more than two score persons at the outside.

Fay thought she had never seen Cornelia look lovelier than on this evening, although she had seen Cornelia on many occasions, and Cornelia was one of those girls who *always* looked lovely. Such a thing as care she had never known; poverty she was as much acquainted with as she was with hunger; she may have been detained from her dinner by some accident on some occasion and so known hunger; and she may have wanted a diamond she saw in a jeweler's window and had to wait for it a few weeks till certain rents were paid, or certain interests became due. This was the extent of the self-denials that had ever been required of her. Not being able to spend their income in Philadelphia, and preferring to live there to any other city in the world, the Cornwallis family had suffered no inconvenience whatever from the loss of their Southern estates beyond the knowledge that less money was accumulating for them who

had already more than they knew what to do with.

Cornelia was twenty-six years old; not young for a spinster, according to American ideas, in spite of her teeth, which were fine. There was a sort of dead level of excellence in all Cornelia's features which contributed in no small degree to that invariable loveliness which was in marked contrast to the "good" and "bad day" beauty of most girls. Pony was one of these; on some days her eyes seemed to take on new brilliancy, her hair was glossier and more curly, her cheeks glowed as if they were afire; and on other days, and without apparent reason too, her eyes looked dull, her cheeks pale, her hair was as straight as "black Bess's mane," she would say, twisting it around her fingers and pulling it till she hurt herself. Fay Underhill also had her "good days;" but in her case the matter seemed to be easily attributable to the fact that some colors were becoming to her and some were not.

But, Cornelia Cornwallis invariably looked well. She had no one particular beauty that asserted itself in a dazzling way. Her hair, her eyes, what color were they? "Sort o' darkish—kind o' bay," Pony was wont to explain. Whatever they were they harmonized well with Cornelia's complexion, which was the one marked beauty about her. It was of that creamy opaqueness seen on the wax-like petals of the camelia; no excitement, no danc-

ing, no exertion of any kind ever flushed or changed it; it was the identical *teint mat* considered by the Parisians as true an evidence of aristocratic birth as the "short upper lip" was of the same thing by Byron.

When to the rare attraction of this fair skin you add the further fact that her figure was admirably moulded, her arms especially a study for a sculptor, her waist round and not too slender, and her shoulders always thrown back in a sufficiently dignified way to satisfy the most inexorable teacher of deportment, it is not astonishing that one of the most frequent apostrophes to her charms was: "Beautiful statue!"

"Well, you *are* a good deal like one of 'them stone gals,'" said Pony facetiously, after reading a sonnet, beginning thus, and sent anonymously in a box of *bonbons*.

Cornelia had not, so far as was publicly known, received an offer of marriage. The fact is she might be said to present the strange paradox of being so eligible a *parti* as to be an ineligible one. Who, even among the exclusive set, possessed the courage to offer himself to her hundreds of thousands of dollars, her beauty, her aristocracy, and ask her to exchange her high-sounding name for his patronymic, whatever it might be? So the brave sex fluttered about her, sighed for her, sent her *bonbons*, flowers, and occasionally ventured on the intimacy of a present of richly-bound books,

or a small *objet d'art;* never attempting the lover-like decorating his "girl," of a gift of jewelry, of course; and only on holidays venturing the books. But no one proposed.

"The ice-like frigidity of her refusal," said one young fellow to another at the Philadelphia club, "would be worse than a black eye from any male member of her family."

When the Cornwallises were last abroad, rumors of an alliance for Cornelia had been wafted back to this country, and the best society of the three Atlantic cities was on tip-toe to know who it might be. If a foreigner, had he a title?—and if he had, was it English or Continental?

He was a French Marquis, with a name which is frequently seen in French history, particularly prominent during the reign of Charles X. Thus far everything was satisfactory. Cornelia had given the subject some consideration, and had once or twice scribbled the name "*Cornélie, Marquise de* ——," to see how the signature would look. It looked very well, Cornelia thought; and the prospect of being addressed as "Madame la Marquise" actually sent a little glow of pride and gratified vanity to flush the marble-like cheek of the Philadelphia beauty. The gentleman's appearance was sufficiently agreeable. True, he was forty-eight, according to his own confession; gray where he was not bald, and bald where he was not gray; of a rotundity of figure the reverse of poetical; but

his manners were dignified, his language choice—not a tinge of Second Empire slang soiling his pure diction; his air of deference towards Cornelia was very flattering to her; and above all and through all was the fact that his name was incontestably a fine one, had been borne for centuries by *preux chevaliers* of the ancient time, who waved aloft on gory battle-fields the lilies of France, and died shouting "For my lady, my country and my king!"

"He has some queer capers," Cornelia was once moved to say in regard to her Marquis; and that a gentleman so formal in his manners as was the Marquis should ever descend to a thing of such questionable dignity as a "caper" seemed very strange. The peculiarity to which Cornelia referred was a curious and marked *penchant* on the part of the French nobleman to frequent the business streets of Paris. When he was seated, by invitation, in the luxurious *calèche* or the high-swinging *D'Orsay* of the Cornwallis family, drawn by their spanking bays, sometimes four of them, whose ringing hoofs made musical clatter on the admirably-paved streets, whose gold-mounted harness glittered in the bright sun, and whose rosetted ears twitched with pride and pleasure, Monsieur le Marquis would lean forward and say with truly aristocratic languor:

"An annoying little *course* I forgot to take, and which must be attended to! Would you be so ami-

able ?—thanks, a thousand times. Coachman, rue Richelieu, number —."

They found it was some jeweler's shop, or a distinguished tailor's—"*fournisseur de leurs majestés et de leurs altesses Imperiales et royales*"—half the Almanach de Gotha! The Marquis descended, stayed but an instant, was accompanied back to the door by a respectful tradesman who looked complacently at the carriage and its inmates, then bowed low to all as they drove away in the direction of the Champs Elysées and the Bois.

"I wish he'd take a *fiacre* at two francs an hour and do his errands before he comes to us," said Cornelia very impatiently one afternoon, as this performance was repeated for at least the dozenth time; yet when the tradesman came to his door with the Marquis and bowed low and rubbed his hands together obsequiously and said in a tone so loud that some passers heard him and turned to look at the distinguished personage whom he was addressing and by whose patronage he was honored, "*Bien*, Monsieur le Marquis! You can rely upon its being done in a manner which will be agreeable to the desires of Monsieur le Marquis," Cornelia again thought how pleasant it would be to be addressed as "Madame la Marquise," and have the coronet and arms of the ancient family painted on her carriage panels.

The elders of the Cornwallis family proceeded to look into matters very carefully when the Marquis's

demande en mariage came. They knew long ago that the Marquis was no impostor so far as his birth and lineage were concerned; no mushroom aristocrat with a family born overnight in some successful *roturier's* infamous reign; but an aristocrat of the old *roche*, a true noble of the *ancien régime*. That his fortune might be small they thought likely enough, and were prepared not only to overlook that, but to make such arrangement of Cornelia's fortune as would be satisfactory to her high-born husband and, at the same time, just to his beautiful wife. But, even the Cornwallis family, who could scarcely be called Americans of the unsophisticated sort, were somewhat astonished to find that the Marquis, "*criblé de dettes*," required the entire liquidation of these obligations by the Cornwallis family—in fact he had promised his good tradesmen that they should be paid as soon as he was married, and this was the reason he had occasionally driven the Cornwallis carriage about among the business portion of the city. A bit of stage effect like this is very telling with a French tradesman. Relying on his word and the evident wealth of the family with which he had linked himself, the *bons diables* had entirely ceased to annoy him for money for some time past; and now he was about to be married they must be paid. The Marquis had promised them this. A Marquis could not go behind his word. *Noblesse oblige!*

This matter the Cornwallis elders required time

to think over; and "*apropos de bottes!*" the Marquis said—for the first time infringing on the purity of his utterance by a little pleasantry of expression—there was another little affair they might as well think over at the same time. Nothing more formidable, so please you, than four children—who bore the Marquis's ancient escutcheon with the unfortunate addition of the bar sinister—for whom and for their mother, a washerwoman at Neuilly, some suitable provision of money was required to be made!

The Americans were furious.

"This is an insult to us," they cried.

"The same insult was offered to Queen Victoria, who accepted it for the sake of a suitable match for her daughter," said the Marquis, coolly.

The Marquis alluded to Prince Christian, a German "Highness" whose "left-handed" or morganatic marriage was said to have been set aside and his children provided for on his espousing a daughter of the Queen of England.

So distinguished a precedent one would think might have had some effect on people, who despite their wealth and the name of which they were very proud, were mere Americans, after all. But it had not. The Cornwallises considered themselves insulted, the Marquis disgraced, and from that moment the whole affair was "off." Cornelia never knew exactly what the point of disagreement was; but when the decision that she was not

to marry him was finally made, she drew a deep sigh and confessed to herself that even to be "*Cornélie, Marquise de* ——," would have required sacrifices which, on the whole, she was glad she was not going to be called upon to make.

CHAPTER XVI.

A SAUCY TRIUMPH AND A SORRY DOOM.

THAT fishing for a Marquis had been three years ago ; and now once more there was a whisper in society that there was a titled suitor for Cornelia's hand—this time an English lord, who had been traveling during the winter in the States, had seen the Carnival festivities at New Orleans, the *Mardi gras* and its Mystick Krewe procession and ball, had intended to go on the plains and shoot buffalo, but had recoiled from the prospective hardships and returned to the cities and watering-places on the Atlantic coast, where the girls were pullings caps for him—in which delectable occupation they were aided by designing mothers and ambitious papas. The name of this admired gentleman was Lord de Coram, and it was generally understood that he was to be present at Cornelia's birthday party—her *soirée intime*.

"Do you know you are looking most lovely to-night, Cornelia?" said Fay, admiringly, as the girls stood together, near the door where Cornelia was receiving guests as they arrived.

"Am I?" asked Miss Cornwallis, as if quite surprised. "I told the dressmaker to send me home the simplest kind of toilet. My maid wanted me to wear diamonds but I would not."

In ordering a simple toilet for this occasion Cornelia had been animated by that admirable spirit of the true gentlewoman which leads her to *dress under* the most simply appareled of her guests. Nothing is more trying to a lady than to find herself in an assemblage where—either through a misconception of its character, or through lack of fortune—she discovers that she is outdressed by every woman present. A painful sense of being "shabby" forces itself upon her, and what a relief it is then to find her hostess so simply dressed that the toilet of the most unobtrusively costumed of those present seems quite "dress" enough!

Cornelia's costume, if simple, was in exquisite taste and very becoming. It was a blue silk, covered with some diaphanous material of the same shade, looped here and there with faint pink rosebuds. About her neck and arms were corals brought by herself from Naples, an exquisite choice, the color being no deeper than that rosy blush seen inside a sea shell. Her gloves of the

same delicate rose color fitted as gloves should—if there is any aptness in the simile of "fitting like a glove." Her white throat was bare, but her shoulders were not exposed; and, all in all, she was a lovely picture as she stood at the door of the drawing-room in the old Philadelphia mansion, welcoming her guests.

They came slowly, and the party moved heavily —why, it was difficult to say. One young man sat on an ottoman in an easy, familiar attitude, and was endeavoring to make fun and not succeeding very well. A young lady was escorted to the piano and began to play one of Mendelssohn's songs without words. Suddenly her memory failed her and she broke down. In a confused way she left the piano and nothing could induce her to return.

All this was very trying to Cornelia. She wished now that she had engaged some professional musicians; the excellent band she always caused to come when she gave dancing parties, during which the musicians sat in the gallery in the dining-room and played waltzes and quadrilles in the nicest way. But this was not a dancing party at all; it was but a *soirée intime*, and Cornelia was vexed enough that her guests would not be intimate—as Pony afterwards expressed it—"worth a cent."

In spite of this drawback, the party had many agreeable features.

"A somewhat different gathering from those at the hops at Long Branch," said Mrs. Underhill to her husband; and "yes, indeed," said Mr. Underhill to his wife, eyeing the distinguished groups of young and old people who were moving quietly about, or as quietly sitting.

One cause of the dullness was the quiet bearing of those present; the young people were seated together in groups, but seemed to have little to say; they were people who constantly saw each other, and there was really not much to talk about that was new or startling. Some middle-aged people moved through the picture-gallery and examined some well-known masterpiece attentively, although they had seen it numberless times before. Two powdered dames—powdered by nature with her puff of years—sat at a *marqueterie* table, and played whist with two dignified old gentlemen, who wore stocks instead of modern neck-ties, fob-ribbons for watch-chains, and approved of a monarchical form of government; a style of human fossil to be met with nowhere in this country, but in Philadelphia.

"I shall give a hint for refreshments to be brought in," said Cornelia to Fay, "although it's an hour before I ordered them. Perhaps that will make the people more lively."

"Although they're quiet," said Fay, "it's a beautiful party. I don't think I ever saw so select a one, even at your house, Cornelia. Every per-

son here is *somebody*," concluded Fay, using an understandable phrase.

"Oh yes," assented Cornelia, quickly, "if there were any vulgarity here, I should die."

Meantime at that very moment, vulgarity—or what Cornelia considered such—was laying aside its wrappings, prior to making its entrance into that gorgeous drawing-room, and ushering itself, an uninvited guest, into the presence of the fastidious Cornelia. In other words, Pony Parsons with a heart beating hard against her breast—for this was really the most audacious of her many escapades—had arrived, accompanied by her parents, and by the German pork packer, who was wholly innocent, poor man, of any knowledge of the true set of circumstances which had brought him to these brilliantly illuminated halls, whose *chef d'œuvres* of art he admiringly though hastily scanned.

Mr. and Mrs. Parsons walked into the drawing-room—their daughter as they thought close behind them. But Pony lingered outside, pretending to be wrestling, as she told Hermann, with a "refractory glove."

"Cornelia is so stiff," she said to her friend, "that she'd make it a dire offense if you went into her presence with any of your gear out of kilter."

At length the refractory glove was curbed into submission, and Pony entered the drawing-room a step in advance of Hermann. The excitement of the situation was written in her dilated eye and

nostril, and on her burning cheek; but her step was steady, and her head thrown back, precisely the same as it was on those occasions when she had in her hands the reins of some horse she did not know, but suspected of a disposition to run away.

She had relied somewhat on her power of "reading" people, to judge beforehand how Cornelia would act, what she would say and do, when her astonished eyes fell on Hermann Kalbfleisch; but Cornelia at the moment was standing with her back to the door, talking to a gentleman of middle age and distinguished appearance, and whom Pony recognized as the head of a high family, Philadelphia's very cream of cream. So Pony could not read her. Backs are difficult, if not impossible, to read. But, something in the way a stray curl hung over her left shoulder told the unfortunate Pony that when Cornelia saw them, she would give them both the cut direct, if not actually order the servant to show them the door.

At that moment Cornelia saw them. Pony's heart stood still.

With a face upon which not the slightest sign of surprise was written, Cornelia smiled a smile of dignity worthy of a queen receiving a king at the head of her royal staircase; then sinking into a curtsey of swanlike grace, she said in admirable German, "You are welcome, Herr Kalbfleisch! Pray make yourself at home in the house you honor by your presence."

Pony breathed hard. "Worthy of old Vere de Vere herself," she muttered, thoroughly relieved.

Of course, of Pony's doubts and fears Hermann knew nothing; he had thought little enough beforehand about coming to the party, except that it was an excuse to stay longer in Pony's company; but, when his foot crossed the threshold and he saw the high-toned character of the household, the well-trained servants, the profuseness and beauty of the costly works of art scattered on every side, then he remembered Cornelia's stately bearing at the watering-place, and the fact that neither personally nor by letter had she invited him to this party, made him feel not altogether as comfortable as he could have wished.

He was delighted by her reception of him. The bright pink of his whole face deepened with the pleasurable emotion he experienced at her enchanting greeting, and in less than ten minutes his genial spirit had made itself felt by every person present. As a ray of sunlight floods every cranny of a room, dark and musty before, so Kalbfleisch's amiability won its way to all hearts, and made the *soirée* one of charming intimacy as Cornelia had intended. It had been a conversazione where nobody would converse; immediately after Hermann's arrival, everybody fell to chatting and laughing in the most delightful way. The young man sitting in the careless attitude on the ottoman, who had hitherto looked terribly *ennuyé*, rose and

shook hands with Kalbfleisch as he was introduced, and sank back again on the ottoman with a face whose expression was much more animated than before. Of course it was not long before Hermann was at the piano; whether he was invited to play or whether he rushed there of his own accord as the needle flies to the pole, no one noticed; but soon such harmonies were rising in those noble rooms as that Steinway Grand had never before emitted, you may be sure. Cornelia was delighted. Her party was a complete success; it had been a *soirée intime*, a *conversazione*—now it was a *musicale*, and of the best sort, too. No wonder she was pleased.

"It's Rubenstein disguised as a good-looking fellow," said a traveled young man who played a little himself, but who would not have touched the piano now for a fortune.

Then Hermann began to sing. His sweet, bell-like voice, favored by the lofty rooms and the excellent tone of the piano, sounded stronger and clearer than the girls had ever heard it at the Branch, where the wiry piano and the low ceilinged great parlor, all doors and windows, were trying adjuncts. But here all was auspicious. The piano was literally surrounded by admirers who applauded vociferously and clapped their hands and cried "bravo!" as one after another of Hermann's *herzen* were broken, or his hopes ran high and taking B flat splendidly from the chest, he con-

cluded now a plaintive love wail, now a joyous hymn with German rhyme felicitously wedded to German melodies; not a sugary jingle, but noble numbers, difficult to execute, but simple in the hearing. The distinguished gentleman to whom Cornelia had been talking as they entered seemed like a man fascinated by a magic spell. He sat at Hermann's side entranced, and after each song was concluded, asked for another; apologizing for being so voracious, but asking none the less voraciously.

"Jove!" cried a young man in Pony's hearing, "he's Mario—when Mario had a voice."

"But who is he really? Does any one know?" asked a lady.

"I do," said Pony. "He's a baron and packs pork in Chicago."

Hermann had begun to sing again, and no one listened to the absurd girl.

This evening was one of unalloyed triumph to Pony. From an anxiety more painful and harrowing than any she had ever before felt, she had passed to a state of exultation all the greater from the miserable depression which had preceded it. Hermann sitting at the piano, enchanting everybody by his Orpheus-like strains, was as unaffected and unconscious of power as a child; while Pony whisked about the rooms, the very spirit of sport and saucy grace.

"Cornelia," she said, as she stood leaning

against the piano as if it belonged to her, while Hermann and the rest of the company were eating delicious ices, moulded into fruit-like shapes, and served on dainty bits of porcelain imitating grape-leaves, "where's your lord? Your lord didn't come, did he?"

"Hush!" said Cornelia, reprovingly. "There he is, sitting opposite us, on that stool."

"What!" cried Pony. "You don't mean to say it's that chap! I've been looking at him all the evening. You don't mean to say that that youth's a lord—who comes into a lady's drawing-room, takes a stool and sits on his leg!"

This was the very *degagé* attitude Lord de Coram had taken and retained almost the whole evening. Cornelia had observed it, and had not liked it; but, how was it possible to indicate even faintly her displeasure at such an unmentionable thing!

"I didn't think a lord would sit on his leg. I thought a lord always stood on his dig," said Pony.

"Do be quiet, Pony!" cried Cornelia, almost imploringly.

"Oh, I won't say anything to him about it if you don't want me to," answered Pony, with delightful condescension; "after all, a lord's legs are his own, I suppose, and he can do what he likes with them, especially in a free country. But what I look at is that you should always be teasing me about 'bad form,' and 'low tone,' and all the rest of it, when here's a live lord with a pedigree

as big as a bed-quilt, who comes and brings his leg to your *soirée intime* for the sole purpose, it would seem, of sitting on it."

Moving away from Pony, thus effectually stopping her remarks, Cornelia approached Fay Underhill, who had sat on a sofa next her mother almost without stirring the whole evening.

"Why, Fay, dear," said Cornelia, taking her hand, "how dull and moped you look! What's the matter? You're not enjoying yourself!"

No indeed; poor Fay was not; but that was not Cornelia's fault, nor the fault of her party, which was growing more and more pleasant all the time. But Fay was sad; in any case she would have been sad, being away from Stuart. She could enter into no enjoyment he did not share. But the cause of her sadness was deeper than this; she was unhappy because she was beginning to fear Stuart did not love her as he once did. Else why these sudden and mysterious absences at Long Branch for hours and hours at a time?—absences which he never explained, never alluded to again. Then his manner, formerly so warm, so loving—now it was frequently *distrait*, sometimes so much so that he actually failed to answer her when she spoke to him. She had come off to Philadelphia without saying good-by to him, but leaving a note to tell him where she was going; and he had not even answered it. She had not asked him to do so, but in other days he would

have done more than answer her note—he would have taken the next train to Philadelphia, and been with her now at Cornelia's party. See how happy Pony was because the young German who liked her was present! How much more did Fay require the presence of her dear lover whom she had known and loved for years!

"I am not feeling well, Cornelia," said Fay, languidly. "I think we must be going soon. I'd like a glass of ice-water, dear, if there's any about."

"I'll find a servant and send you some," said Cornelia, rising.

"I'll go with you," said Fay, rising also. "It won't hurt me to stir about a little. I've been sitting on this sofa the whole evening."

They walked back into the dining-room. A table plenteously supplied with every luxury appropriate to the occasion that a French *chef de cuisine* could think of, was standing in the centre of the room, and servants were waiting upon a party of gentlemen, of whom Lord de Coram was one.

As Cornelia and Fay entered, the gentlemen bowed. A servant gave Fay a glass of ice-water, and after she had sipped it the girls walked towards the conservatory.

"Engaged to Stuart Phelps," Fay heard some one say as she and Cornelia walked behind the blooming shrubbery, hidden from sight.

Then Lord de Coram's voice was heard. "Stuart Phelps! What! not that man we saw at

Long Branch kissing the California widow in the dark hall at midnight?"

Fay grasped Cornelia's hand and held her breath. Then she hurried back into the dining-hall, in a gait faster than walking, dragging with her Cornelia, who vainly entreated her to come away.

Fay Underhill's brow and cheek were whiter than Cornelia's unvarying complexion when she faced the young nobleman.

"Lord de Coram," said the poor girl in a choked voice; "I overheard your last remark. Do you mean to say that you saw the gentleman to whom I am engaged kissing the California widow—by whom I suppose you mean Mrs. Duncan—at Long Branch at midnight?"

Lord de Coram was silent for an instant. Cornelia wondered what the youth who had passed the evening sitting on his leg would do. Throwing back a stray lock off his forehead, he looked straight in the eyes of the agonized girl before him, and said in a manly voice:

"I am sorry to be obliged to give you pain; I shouldn't have thought of saying what I did if I had fancied you were going to overhear me—just because I should not have given you the pain, you know; for no other reason. I certainly did see what I said, and am prepared to take the consequences of the statement if you wish to use my name in connection with it."

"And I must back Lord de Coram in this," said

the middle-aged Philadelphian who has been mentioned. "I saw the same thing he speaks of. We were down for the day at Long Branch, and saw the incident when we were going to our rooms at night."

Cornelia took Fay into her own room, and held the poor girl's hot head on her breast while the blinding rain of tears was falling. When, after a half an hour, she came downstairs, neither her mother nor her father noticed that there was anything amiss with their petted Fay; and if at the hotel they wondered why she kept her gas burning so late in the room adjoining theirs, which she occupied, they did not know it was because she was engaged in composing this letter to Stuart:

"When you receive this note you will understand that I know *all*. You have deceived me, and I shall never trust you again. Everything is at an end between us. From this time forth you will please understand that we are nothing to each other—not even acquaintances. I wish to have no explanations with you. Explanations are out of the question. If you call at our house the servant will have instructions not to admit you. If you write, your letters will be returned unopened.

"FAY UNDERHILL."

This impetuous document Stuart received the next morning at his place of business in New York; and with a bitter sigh he laid it beside this other,

received from the same postman and equally impetuous:

"Oh, Stuart! Why did you treat me so cruelly in presence of those strangers? What crime have I committed in loving you so devotedly that even womanly pride is forgotten in the longing to be forgiven? I struggled against the passion which I considered hopeless—for I believed you loved another. But you have told me with your own dear lips that you love me. Do you repent having given me this joy? If you do, I will give you back your promise, and never speak of love again; but oh Stuart, do not be cruel to me. Be at least my friend, for Heaven knows I need a friend, lonely and unhappy woman that I am!

"After you had gone, Long Branch was a desert to me. I came at once to town; and am now staying at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, where I shall always be at home to you whenever you will come. But whether you come or not—yes, even though you doom me to despair—I shall never forget the man who let in one sweet ray of sunshine on my unhappy life.

"Yours, until death,

"DIANA DUNCAN."

CHAPTER XVII.

HIGH LIFE IN THE SHOPS.

TOWARD the end of September, Cornelia Cornwallis accepted an invitation to visit her friend Fay in New York. Mr. and Mrs. Underhill had as yet no knowledge of the new condition of affairs between their daughter and Stuart Phelps. They had observed that but little had been seen of Stuart since Long Branch; but both these elderly people had been engrossed in their own duties since their return from Philadelphia, and they supposed, if they thought about it at all, that he had written to Fay—perhaps called at the house and she had seen him. Their daughter was engaged to this young man, whom they knew well and honored; the affianced couple had perfect liberty, as have all American young people who are engaged—and some who are not—but they had noticed that Fay seemed rather dull, since returning from the gayeties at the Branch, and the subsequent gayeties in Philadelphia; and so they had joined with Fay in urging Cornelia to come and spend a few weeks in noisy Gotham. Cornelia wanted to see her milliners, and dressmakers,

bootmakers, and other *fournisseurs*. She graduated the importance of these people by a sliding scale of her own: first, those in Paris, whom she saw but seldom, but esteemed the most highly; second, those of New York, who had the next highest place in her esteem; and finally, those in Philadelphia, whom she esteemed but lightly.

The house of Mr. and Mrs. Underhill was neither outside so imposing, nor inside so commodious as the Cornwallis mansion in Philadelphia. It was merely what a house-agent would describe as a four-story, high-stoop, brown-stone, twenty-two-and-a-half-foot-front house on Madison Square; but put in the market on a rainy day and at a dull moment, would fetch more money than the Philadelphia mansion sold under the best auspices, in the best season, to the best purchaser. The house was not only comfortably but richly furnished, but there was no picture-gallery, and indeed, no works of art at all, except a few unpretentious bronzes which ornamented tables and *consoles*. Mr. Underhill had never been abroad, and candidly confessed that he was no *connoisseur* in works of art. This being the case, he said he preferred not to buy these things here, pay an outrageous price for them, and perhaps be cheated at last; but one of these fine days he intended to go to Europe, get some friend who understood these things to go about with him and spend a few loose thousands for him among the artists of to-day—for the old

masters he abhorred and was honest enough to acknowledge it.

In spite of the lack of works of art the house was very agreeable. Fay had a couple of rooms all to herself on the second story—one hung prettily in pink chintz, the other of no particular color, but handsomer perhaps on that account. Here was a chair worked in worsteds by Fay herself and mounted richly in green velvet; there was a patchwork stool whose prevailing tint was a warm crimson, and which had been fashioned by the dexterous fingers of some good kind old aunt in the country; a tiny table had a light-blue cloth with Pompadour designs thrown over it; there were books, photographs, choice engravings, a bright chromo, a tiny *verd antique* clock, a *jardinière* full of blooming plants in the window. The girls managed to pass the time very agreeably here.

"It's so pleasant to look out of your windows," said Cornelia.

"Yes, I often sit at the window for hours looking on the square," said Fay.

The same square upon which Mrs. Duncan looked from her windows at the Fifth Avenue Hotel! With an opera-glass these two women, who both loved the same man, might have seen each other.

The morning after Cornelia's arrival, a carriage, the elegance of whose appointments struck every passer-by, stood before the Underhill house wait-

ing for the ladies. It was an English landau, that most convenient of vehicles, lined with dark-green cloth, the liveries of driver and footman being of the same color. It bore the Underhill monogram on the door-panels and on the gilt harness of the sleek-coated horses; and the young ladies went down to it in the most bewitching of hats, the jauntiest of jackets, the daintiest of gloves.

"Mamma," cried Fay, at the parlor-door, "Come, aren't you going?"

"No, dears, I can't go this morning. I am busy. You can go without me, can't you?"

"Of course—only we'd rather you were along."

"I'd like to go," said Mrs. Underhill, "but it is impossible this morning. Take good care of yourselves."

Jo, the dapper little footman, stood with the carriage door in his hand, waiting patiently. Jo was a slim, black-eyed little fellow, straight as a ramrod, who had been a jockey in his youth; how old he was, no one knew; his hair was sparse, he had tiny side-whiskers, fine teeth and a big mouth with which he was always grinning. The Underhills called him privately Sam Weller.

The young ladies sank back into the deep, luxurious cushions, and Jo touched his hat and asked "Where to, if you please, ladies?"

"Where shall we go first, Cornelia?" asked Fay.

"Why, let's go to Dortch's first; they say her new hats are lovely. I must have a new hat at once—this is a fright."

No one would have suspected it to look at it; but as Cornelia Cornwallis said so, of course it must be so. Fay gave Jo the milliner's number in Broadway and off they drove.

The weather was superb. The sun shone with sufficient warmth to render all cumbersome wrappings unnecessary, and yet not enough to cause one a single reminder of the fatal work he had been doing all through the summer months. The streets were teeming with people, and alive with an almost boisterous gayety, engendered by the beauteous weather, by the crowd, by the gay look of the shops; cabs were in demand, private carriages stood three deep and stretched far out into by-streets near favorite stores; a half dozen or more vehicles were in front of Dortch's, a quiet place, in fact nothing more than some rooms on the first floor over a confectioner's.

Jo hopped down and rang Dortch's bell; a neat girl opened the door; and the young ladies went upstairs. Dortch's rooms were crowded. Twenty people were quite enough to crowd Dortch's rooms, two small parlors, with shallow glass cases built against the walls, whose doors were lined with violet silk, and in whose recesses marvels of millinery were known to be hidden. Smaller glass cases stood in front of these, dainty enough

for a jeweler to keep his richest gems in; and herein were to be seen most ravishing adjuncts of the milliner's art—gorgeous crests of birds trapped in East Indian jungles and South American wilds; rose-buds from Parisian *ateliers* with which the living flowers need not have blushed to claim sisterhood; laces sent by Brussels manufacturers and made by poor souls who have lace-making for youth, blindness for middle age, as their inevitable portion; and a handful of gold coin flung carelessly in one corner among these dainties, some sovereigns and napoleons Miss Dortch had left over when she returned from Europe a day or two ago.

Miss Dortch is a tall, heavily-built Englishwoman, past middle-age, whose manners, though lacking that suavity your French tradeswoman has in such perfection, nevertheless are pleasing and deferential to those of her customers whom she knows to be rich—and none but rich people can long remain customers of Dortch; but her strong point—and very proud of it she is—is the trait which Daniel Webster had in such perfection; she never forgets a face, always remembers names, and "bears a brain" in relation to who married who, what offspring they had, and much similar detail.

When our young ladies enter, Miss Dortch is expatiating on the beauties of a hat to a brace of purchasers, one of whom is a gentleman. He is very young, wears a glass in one eye, hold-

ing it there by the most painful facial contortions; and between doing this, and taking care of a heavy cane, and occasionally plucking at a few straw-colored hairs which are pasted together at their ends and which he calls his moustache, he is pretty fully employed; not so much so, however, as to prevent his taking an active interest in the purchase—or the rejection—of this hat. His young wife—a creature as insipid, as colorless as himself, but like himself dressed in faultless taste, (strange how well some people dress themselves, who can't do anything else on earth well!) likes the hat very well, except that there is something wrong with the "feathaw!"

"Why, *I* assure *you*, Mrs. De Jones," says Dortch in her rich, mellow, English tone, "that that feather is *the* most gorgeous thing ever seen in New York. It's shick, as the French say—very shick. There's not another like it in this city. People of the *tonn* will know that's one of my hats by the feather. They'll say 'that's one of Dortch's hats—I know by that feather.' $40 is dirt cheap for that hat—the feather cost $35. The Princess Louisa is wearing a feather like that this season. I saw her myself. Mrs. De Jones, I think your dear mamma, Mrs. Shalo, will be very much pleased at your buying that hat—on account of the feather."

"Well, b-but, Miss D-Dortch, don't you th-think"—put in the husband. Heavens, he stut-

ters! To be obliged to carry around that eye-glass and that moustache, to be loaded with the heavy cane, *and* to stutter!—it is too much even for the polite Dortch, and she is glad to leave them alone a while to discuss the merits of the feather, while she advances to greet Cornelia and Fay.

"My dear Miss Cornwallis, good morning. I am delighted to see you (Miss Underhill, you're looking like a rose)," the great Dortch shakes hands with them; "Miss Cornwallis, how *is* your dear aunt, Miss Cornelia? I met Lady Meadowlane in Piccadilly, just before I left London, and her ladyship says to me 'Miss Dortch,' says she 'can you tell me how is my dear friend Miss *Cor*nelia *Corn*wallis of *Phil*adelphia?'"

"Aunt Corny's pretty well, thank you," says Cornelia, good-naturedly; "we're come to look at your hats, Miss Dortch."

"Such beauties!" says Miss Dortch, giving the first syllable of the latter word a queer twang, common among vulgar English people, which makes it sound almost as if written be*ow*ties. "You never saw the like, I'm sure."

"Oh Miss Dortch," protested Fay, "when we've been seeing all your hats for the past six years!"

"Lo-o-ok at her in that one!" screams Dortch in admiration, as an attendant slips a hat upon Cornelia's Grecian head. "Doesn't she look like a marble statue?"

"A marble statue with a round hat on!" says Fay, and Cornelia smiles.

"I sold one like that this morning," chatters Dortch, "be*ow*tiful lady—said she didn't find my hats dear at all," a suppressed murmur of astonishment at the imbecility of the lady who didn't find Dortch's hats dear at all fills the room from end to end; "What was her name now? Stops at the Fifth Avenue Hotel—oh yes, Mrs. Duncan—Mrs. Diana Duncan."

Fay bites her lip and looks out of the window.

"Take this hat off," says Cornelia, "I don't like it."

In one or two more tryings she is suited. She is so handsome that anything looks well on her. So presently she and Fay take leave, Dortch crying after them to be sure and remember her to their dear mammas and papas, brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, uncles and so forth, and if they desire to send any word to the nobility and gentry of England to be sure and give her the message as she is going over again in a couple of months and will be quite likely to see the Royal family among others.

When they returned to the carriage Cornelia said to Fay: "So it appears Mrs. Duncan is about again."

"Yes, so it seems. I trust we shall not run across her anywhere."

"That wouldn't trouble me," replied Cornelia;

"I should have no difficulty in giving her the cut direct."

"Where now?" asked Fay.

"To that horrid little woman who has those beautiful shoes," and she named a street running off Broadway.

It was a little triangular hole of a shop, which was principally a window, on the ground-floor. The window was full of boots, shoes and slippers intended for ladies' wear, and all stuffed out with cotton to represent feet of faultless proportions, according to a shoemaker's idea. Such amazingly high insteps! Such curved soles! Such pointed toes and elevated heels! Unfortunately none of Madame Wiener's customers—and no other woman—had feet like that, and no small cause of her customers' misery in life was due to their efforts to make themselves—and other people—believe they had.

They entered the little hole of a shop, squeezing through the doorway to get in, and found a lugubrious woman in rusty black, doing battle with two horribly dirty children who were trying to wrest from her hands a pair of white-satin slippers to use as playthings. Seeing her customers, the woman with a frantic effort managed to drive the children away into some inner hole, muttering something about "les enfants" being "le diable."

Mme. Wiener's conversation was one long-drawn whine; times were so hard; rents were so dear;

children were so "diable;" American ladies were so lazy that she didn't dare leave this expensive shop and take one on an upper floor where the rent would be cheaper; her last importation of boots had been a mistake, the "imbècile" in Paris having misunderstood her order; a great leader of society had just mortally offended her by saying that her shop smelled of apples—"as if apples smelled bad!" ejaculated the unfortunate shoe-seller.

Cornelia paid the price of seventeen dollars for a pair of boots; and Fay bought some house-slippers with a pretty bow for six dollars; but Madame Wiener was still grumbling, through her thanks, when they departed.

Their next and last errand was to the dressmaker —Penelon, the renowned. This personage occupied a handsome house over whose broad portal the magic word PENELON! was inscribed in gilt letters, in the fashion of the tomb of the Capulets as seen on any stage. Handsome lace curtains were hanging at the windows; the vestibule was paved with marble kept spotlessly clean; a capacious umbrella-rack gave token of the number of visitors whom Madame Penelon was in the habit of receiving on rainy days as well as others.

Madame Penelon was a very different person from either of the two female merchants whom the girls had this morning visited. She was probably a great deal richer than even the great Dortch; for where Dortch handled from $25 to $50 each for

hats, no dress had ever been known to leave Penelon's establishment costing less than $100, and there was a wedding dress at this moment hanging on a wire figure in the parlor whose price was $1000. Her charges were ruinous; yet her *clientele* was enormous and constantly increasing. She was a personable woman of about forty, tall and stout, with beady black eyes, rosy cheeks, and black hair always admirably *coiffé*. Two superb brilliants hung in her ears, and she showed her French instincts unmistakably in this; for if you will observe, your French woman, let her be never so thrifty, never so saving, must pay herself first a pair of diamond earrings out of her economies—other savings may follow, but this national coquetry must come first.

Madame Penelon greeted the young ladies with a cordiality not less marked than that of the great Dortch; but it was more graceful, less forced, thoroughly French. She inquired their pleasure with as sweet a smile and as keen an interest as if on their custom alone depended her ability to keep up the elegant house in which she lived; or, better still, as if there were no question of self-interest in the matter at all, but as if the fashioning of new gowns for these two lovely girls were her one esthetic joy in life.

When Cornelia had ordered a dinner toilet, and a street costume, and something she could wear to the opera if they chanced to go, and a black silk

suit *pour toujours aller*, Madame Penelon's capacious maw yawned again and asked for "more."

"Why, nothing more, I think," said Cornelia, "unless you care to undertake the making of a little dress for me at charges which shall bear some proportion to the cost of the material. It was brought me from Canada the other day, and the whole dress pattern cost less than two pounds."

Brought from the carriage, it proved to be an admirable woolen fabric, soft in texture, dark in hue, which when well made would be excellent wear for the street, especially in quiet Philadelphia. Penelon admired it, thought it would be *chic* if made up "stylishly," but as for cheapness!—*desolée*, but really it was as much trouble to make this dress as another; the trimmings would be as costly as for a more expensive fabric, and so Penelon found it impossible to turn out this little dress, which originally cost ten dollars, for less than seventy-five dollars.

It may seem strange that a girl so rich as Cornelia Cornwallis should take the trouble to inform herself in advance on such an ignoble subject as this matter of tradespeople's charges. "How much will it be?" is such a difficult question for some people to utter. Impecuniosity's idea is that Opulence walks into shops, orders what it likes, coolly says, "Send the bill," and sweeps grandly away—as open-handed as those generous folk of the stage,

who fling their money, the purse included, to the first beggar. But, this is Shoddy's plan, not true Fortune's. "If your purse has a hole in it," says a French proverb, "it will soon be empty, no matter how long it is." Cornelia Cornwallis was a very rich girl, and scarcely knew what it was to deny herself anything she wanted; yet she always inquired beforehand what things were to cost, and if she was cheated, she at least had the satisfaction of knowing that she had agreed to it.

Seventy-five dollars for making a dress which cost ten was so manifest an absurdity that Cornelia sent the parcel back to the carriage.

"I know a woman who will make up that dress quite well enough and charge you the most moderate price," said Fay, when they were again wheeling through the busy streets.

"Who is she?" asked Cornelia.

"Her name is Mrs. Nuffer."

"Mrs. Nuffer?"

"Yes; a good, honest soul, and a very neat sempstress. She has no especial 'style,' of course, but by imitating your other dresses I think she will satisfy you. We often employ her to rearrange dresses that have got out of fashion, but which are still good. I'll write to her this afternoon to come and see you."

"Yes, do," said Cornelia.

Fay hastily inscribed the name "Nuffer" on her tablets and then looking at her watch, said, "We

have still an hour before lunch time. Shall we go to Goupil's and look at the new pictures?"

Cornelia acquiescing, Fay gave the good-natured Jo, who was sitting on the box with folded arms and a back with a curve in it Apollo might have envied, a little poke in the waist with her parasol, at which he turned quickly, and touching his hat, leaned back over the carriage to catch the order in such a perilous position that Fay was quite alarmed.

"Take care, Jo," cried she, "you'll be tumbling into the carriage next."

"No fear, miss," said Jo, with a mouth distended from ear to ear in the jolliest of grins.

"Goupil's!" said Fay.

Jo rapped his hat-brim with the side of his forefinger, and leaving Broadway still seething with its crowds, they turned into Fifth Avenue.

The exhibition was a small room up a short flight of stairs which swept to the right and left at the back. The entrance door was heavily draped with maroon cloth, and besides a new Cleopatra which occupied the place of honor, there were a number of other choice pieces by favorite foreign artists. The little room was almost uncomfortably crowded when Fay and Cornelia entered. A faint odor of Ess bouquet, geranium, and other delicate scents was rather felt than detected through the sense of smell; and the rustle of silks, the flash of gold-rimmed eye-glasses, and

the sight of cashmere shawls carelessly hung across their owners' arms ready for wear should the weather change, and other gorgeous paraphernalia, allied to faces really beautiful when they happened to be young, worn and faded when they happened not to be young, but coarse and vulgar at no period, showed the gathering to be chiefly made up of that class who call themselves the exclusives of New York.

Of course in such an assemblage Fay and Cornelia met several people they knew—among others Mrs. Laidless, the English lady whom they had met at Long Branch, who was now known as a countess, and was an immense lioness in consequence. Her chief topic of conversation was the weather—a hackneyed theme, but one in which she threw such positive enthusiasm, that it seemed fresh and vital.

"Such lovely weather!" she exclaimed, with real, whole-souled admiration in her hearty voice. "*Is* it the Indian summer, my dears?"

"I really don't know," said Cornelia; "the Indian summer is such a vague season, I have never been able to quite understand when it begins or ends; but we shall have it like this for a long time now."

The ever-moving crowds swept them apart, and now the girls found themselves face to face with a gentleman who was a frequent visitor at the houses of both and at all the best houses in the town—

Major Cheraw, whom we have met once or twice before. The major was a graduate of West Point, had been in the regular army and lost his left arm at Monterey. After the close of the Mexican war he left the army, and went to Europe, where he lived in superb style *en garçon* in Paris for years. He was understood to be living beyond his means, and did, in fact, make serious inroads into a fine fortune. The breaking out of the war between the North and South called him back to America, where he again offered his sword to his country. It is not unnatural that Major Cheraw should have expected that his country would gladly avail herself of the offer of a sword which had already been honorably wielded in her service —that his country should at once bestow upon him a position which a brave soldier and a gentleman of means and family might be proud to fill. In all this he was disappointed. "Things had changed since I was home last," said the major, with dignity. "I found, sir, that the leading positions in the army were filled by Germans who had been in the ranks of their army at home, Irishmen who had never wielded anything more murderous than a shillalah, and American politicians whose chief instrument of destruction was the whiskey-bottle—men, I don't deny, sir, who did their work well, as it proved, but who nevertheless were in the estimation of a gentleman fresh from daily intercourse with the titled officers

in the armies of England and France, sir, a pack of low wretches with whom it was impossible to associate. I found my breeding a positive bar to my obtaining a position, sir. Democracy howled at the idea of receiving the word of command from lips which were in the habit of uttering grammatical sentences; it laughed at my semi-military costume—a uniform and not a uniform, which I had adopted in Europe simply to show that I was a soldier and had lost my arm in battle and not in some accident with machinery; a necessity that would have been obviated if the United States had allowed me to put a bit of ribbon in my buttonhole, sir, as Frenchmen do."

The lukewarm manner in which the offer of Cheraw's services had been received in Washington was a bitter sting to the proud major. "Nevertheless, I must fight for my country," he said hotly, "even if I have to shoulder a musket." What it might have come to, no one knows. Cheraw was suddenly prostrated with rheumatic fever; for two years he was engaged in fighting that enemy; and at the end of that time—ah, bah! things were going on very well without him; he troubled the authorities at Washington no more with offers of his services. From that day to this, he had been that most useful person in society, an elderly bachelor, a safe and agreeable escort for all the ladies of his acquaintance, married and single, young and old; always at leisure, always good-

natured, always well-dressed. With men he was an immense favorite; still rich enough to live in handsome rooms, keep a valet, and give frequent bachelor dinners at the clubs and restaurants, not a man of his set was more popular than Major Cheraw.

He bowed low as he encountered the young ladies, and stood talking to them with his hat in his hand.

"Have you seen the Cleopatra, Major?" asked Cornelia, "we positively haven't got a glimpse of it yet through these people's backs."

"I have seen it, and studied it for some time, though two fat dowagers stood one on each of my feet and a small child in arms busied itself with my scarf-pin. Being a death's head it—the scarf-pin—frightened it—the child. Whereupon it began to bellow, and its mother removed it."

"And how do you like it—I mean the Cleopatra?" asked Cornelia, laughing.

"I am bound to say not much; the face of Cleopatra is positively ugly. Still, surrounded as it is by so many human faces brimming over with loveliness, it may be that the picture suffers by contrast."

"Let us acknowledge the compliment to the assembled sex by making the Major our prettiest curtseys, Cornelia," said Fay, smiling.

"*Inutile!*" cried the Major. "The compliment was intended for you two ladies alone, who were

in my mind's eye while I was studying the picture, as you always are."

"Always!" uttered Cornelia.

"Well, no matter; you were there at that moment at any rate, for I was just proceeding to call at your house, and if I had not met you I should have been on my way by this."

"Pray return in the carriage and have luncheon with us, Major. Mamma will be delighted," said Fay.

"Thanks; but a prior engagement will prevent my having the pleasure," answered the Major. "My purpose in calling was to ask if yourselves and Mr. and Mrs. Underhill would honor me with your company at the West End Theatre to-night. I have a box for six."

"I can't answer for mamma and papa," said Fay; "but if Cornelia would like to go, I shall only be too happy to go also."

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure," rejoined Cornelia, in answer to the look of inquiry the Major bent upon her.

"Then at a quarter before eight, pray expect me," said Major Cheraw, bowing himself away.

"Now we can look at the picture," cried Fay. "See, Cornelia, here's a free space, and two seats. How fortunate!"

But as they were about to take the seats, Fay suddenly clutched Cornelia's arm and stared with dilated eyes and paling face at a couple who passed

immediately in front of them—Stuart Phelps with Mrs. Duncan.

Mrs. Duncan inclined her shapely head a trifle, but perceiving at a glance that Miss Cornwallis intended to give her the cut direct, while Fay's eyes were bent upon her recreant lover, Mrs. Duncan recovered herself and turned away.

Stuart bowed coldly and haughtily to the ladies, and turned away also. Fay, who had not bowed, still followed him with her eyes. He spoke to Mrs. Duncan, and they resumed their observation of the pictures.

Then Fay said to Cornelia, "Let us go, dear," and they left the gallery. In the carriage the poor girl clasped the hand of her sympathizing friend and murmured in a choking voice, "Now I know I have lost him forever. Oh, Cornelia, my heart will break!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

A WEEPING WIDOW.

WHATEVER else may have been lacking to the happiness of Mrs. Duncan, certainly a well-filled purse was not. On her return from Long Branch she at once drove to the Fifth Avenue Hotel and installed herself in rooms looking out upon the Square.

"Nothing like a pleasant view, is there, Marcia?" said she, drawing back the lace curtains with her jeweled fingers.

"Oh, nothing," was Marcia's reply, again from behind trunk-lids.

The rooms were very elegant. Mrs. Duncan had more than one costly *objet d'art* which she carried with her wherever she went and which added immensely to the effect of whatever apartments she found herself in. Cupid came forth again after his sojourn at Long Branch and looked very guileless standing on top of a dwarf bookcase which was somewhat bare without him, though the unreciprocative bookcase took off nothing from the bareness of the Cupid.

The hotel was overflowing with visitors. The

Fall season had fairly opened and people from all parts of the country were in town, and many of the fashionable hotels were turning people away daily. Madame Pittaluga and the opera troupe were here at the Fifth Avenue; N. B. Wiggins was here; Hermann Kalbfleisch was here, lingering a few days before returning to Chicago, in the hope of getting another glimpse of Pony Parsons, either here in New York, or by returning himself to Philadelphia. The event which he hoped might bring her to New York was the *début* of Madame Pittaluga at the Academy of Music, now being largely advertised. The opera was to be the hackneyed *Trovatore;* a strange selection, it seemed, in view of the fact that Madame Pittaluga claimed to have a *repertoire* of thirty operas; but the management thought the anvils would draw the country people, while musical amateurs would be sure to go hear the prima donna at least once, no matter what she appeared in. Tony McDougall, who picked his teeth a great deal under the columns in front of the hotel, was in a high state of anxiety in regard to the approaching *début* of his operatic friend. He had very nearly concluded an arrangement with her by which, at the end of three months (during which time she was under contract to sing in the cities of of the East for Metzerott, the New York impressario), she was to go with him on an extended tour in the West. Tony was only waiting in New York to be present at Madame's "first night;"

then, during her three months' engagement with Metzerott, Mr. McDougall was going to "run a minstrel show through New England." Such is the versatility of genius. From Mozart to "Shoo fly;" from lively to severe.

By dint of dwelling on Fay's curt letter and contrasting it with that of Mrs. Duncan, Stuart Phelps had finally convinced himself that he was grossly wronged. What! his little Fay, who had known him all these years, turn on him now, in a minute, as it were, with this cruel vindictiveness of spirit, merely because she was a little jealous?—now, of all times in the world, when he had absolutely cut Mrs. Duncan in public, and had resolved to see her no more? He felt himself very hardly treated. Being, of course, unaware of the terrible tale which had reached Fay's ears through Lord de Coram's agency, and in fact being now in a sort of blissful haziness of mind in regard to the events of that unfortunate evening, he was at a loss to account justly for Fay's indignation, and thought it excessive. Presently he found himself getting into a rage concerning it. If this was the way in which Fay was capable of treating him whom she pretended to love, he had reason to rejoice that he was not to be tied to her for life. "Heaven forfend that I should ever be a hen-pecked husband!" muttered Stuart between his teeth.

He began to think a good deal about Mrs. Duncan—and not unkindly. As the days passed on,

he fell into a way of thinking that he ought at least to give her an opportunity for an explanation—of what, he hardly knew; but Fay's refusal to hear his own explanation had so galled him that he put himself in Mrs. Duncan's place. True, he thought he would never stoop to an explanation with Fay; he had been too deeply wronged for that; explanation must come from her.

He could not quite make up his mind, notwithstanding, to call upon Mrs. Duncan at her hotel. But he had fully resolved that if he should meet her by chance he would not be unkind. So the days had passed on; and one day he *had* met her by chance. It was the day when he went to the picture-gallery to see the new Cleopatra. He had hardly counted on Fay's being a witness to that scene; but Fate had ordained it so, it seemed.

"Your friends appear to have taken a lesson from you," said Mrs. Duncan, bitterly, referring to the cut she had this moment received from Miss Cornwallis.

Stuart understood, but was silent.

"Who was it set you against me at Long Branch?" inquired Mrs. Duncan, in her gentlest tones.

She was bewitchingly beautiful. Stuart looked at her admiringly. Were ever seen eyes more deeply blue, cheeks more peach-like, lips riper? She was dressed now in a fashion suited to the season and to the town, and Stuart thought her even lovelier thus than in her summer draperies.

"Oh, nobody—I didn't—that is"—some such disconnected words fell from his lips, and then he said: "It's so hot and close in this place! Have you seen enough of the pictures? Will you walk outside?"

Mrs. Duncan smiled bitterly.

"Suppose your friends should see you walking with me? No doubt they are yet on the avenue."

"Let them," said he, angrily. "I am my own master, thank Heaven! I am nobody's slave, to be dictated to upon subjects about which I am the best judge."

They went outside, but the Underhills' carriage was nowhere to be seen. They walked up the avenue together, not arm-in-arm indeed—of course not—but in comfortable proximity, to avoid the necessity of loud talking. Mrs. Duncan's eyes fairly danced with pleasant excitement, but Stuart looked moody. They had scarcely walked half a block when they came upon Randolph Cabell and his graceful wife, strolling arm-in-arm upon the avenue. Stuart blushed like a girl. Cabell looked astonished, indeed, at seeing him walking so comfortably with the lady whose bow he had in Cabell's presence so pointedly declined to return, and an amused smile lurked in the corners of the young Southerner's mouth, but it was only for an instant. There was courteous greeting, but no stopping to speak. Very naturally the sight of Cabell brought vividly before the minds of both Stuart and Mrs.

Duncan the incident concerning which Mrs. Duncan seemed determined to pursue her investigations.

"You were sitting with that gentleman on the piazza at Long Branch when you gave me that terrible cut, which went like a stab to my heart. Why did you cut me? Somebody had been telling you something about me, had they not? What was it?"

"Nobody had been telling me anything, Mrs. Duncan," answered Stuart; "but I'll tell you frankly what I was angry at. You tempted me to drink wine in your room the night before, and I got drunk. I thought I never could forgive you for it."

"Forgive *me!*" replied Mrs. Duncan. "Why, was it *my* fault? Oh, the old story—'the woman tempted me and I did eat'—the weak, unmanly cry that has been ringing down the ages since Adam. Well, was that all?"

"Yes, that was all." Up to this moment, Stuart had thought this a great deal, and now it actually seemed to have dwindled down into an affair of very small importance. "I hate liquor," he continued. "I loathe it and despise it. If every one were of my way of thinking, there wouldn't be a thimbleful of spirits swallowed in this city in a year."

"Hum! You ought to start out as a temperance lecturer," said she with—was it a sneer? "When

gentlemen call upon me," she continued, "I set out wine as a mere matter of compliment. They can take it or leave it. I never observe which they do."

Of course. This was obviously the simplest action of a courteous hospitality. How stupid he had been not to see it before in this light! He felt he was getting the worst of the present argument, such as it was, and that he'd better drop the subject.

"There was a man at Long Branch," he said, taking up another thread, "who knew you in California."

"Indeed!" ejaculated Mrs. Duncan, the rose for an instant fading on her cheek.

"Yes—a theatrical man."

"A theatrical man! I never knew a theatrical man in my life," cried the widow. "Now what will they say about me next? I shouldn't be surprised if this man told you I'd been a ballet dancer or something equally disgraceful."

"No, no," said Stuart, gravely; "he said you were the wife of a prominent gentleman—only one thing he did say that I didn't exactly like."

"What was that?" asked Mrs. Duncan, anxiously.

"He said you were rather 'fast.'"

"Fast!" repeated she, in a voice trembling with anger. "What does that absurd word mean, I'd like to know? I suppose I was 'fast' because I

drove my husband's horses about the streets, when he was too busy to accompany me. Oh, people are so narrow-minded! But this sort of persecution is well known to me. It has followed me all my life, and I suppose will follow me to the grave. I try not to mind it—I feel that I am foolish and weak to mind it—but there are moments when it seems too much to bear."

They walked on in silence, Stuart feeling a growing sense every moment that he had been ill-treating this unhappy lady, and that it was his bounden duty as a man and a gentleman to atone in some way for his past conduct. But how? That was not so clear. Not by making love to her certainly—on that point he was quite determined—nor by permitting her to make love to him. He had a vague recollection of having been rather affectionate to Mrs. Duncan on the night when her wine had been too much for him, but such a thing should not occur again—simply because he should not drink wine again. So his thoughts were running, when they reached the hotel.

"Will you come in with me?" said Mrs. Duncan, as they turned into Twenty-third Street and walked toward the side entrance of the building. Stuart hesitated.

"Confess," said Mrs. Duncan, "that you *are* afraid of Mrs. Grundy after all, Stuart Phelps. You are asking yourself what she will say if she sees you do so dreadful a thing as accept a lady's

polite invitation to sit for a few minutes in her parlor, in a respectable hotel, and in broad day."

"I care nothing, not only for Mrs. Grundy, but for Mr. Grundy and Miss Grundy and all the little Grundys," Stuart replied, trying to laugh it off.

"That sounds *like* you, Stuart," said Mrs. Duncan with enthusiasm; and they passed into the hotel, and ascended to the pleasant parlor looking on the Square.

The sly Marcia eyed him narrowly as he entered, and then retired to her customary haunt, the inner room, where she could easily hear the conversation which passed in the parlor.

But Mrs. Grundy herself might have heard the conversation without being shocked. It treated only of the most Platonic friendship.

"Of course you do not need that I should remind you, Mrs. Duncan," said Stuart, with a firm and determined voice, "that whatever I did or said, that night at Long Branch, when I was under the influence of liquor, is to be forgotten between us."

"Oh, quite forgotten," said Mrs. Duncan, raising her eyes to Stuart's in the most tender and loving manner possible.

"I have but the vaguest recollection of all that took place," said Stuart; "indeed, I never should have alluded to the subject if you had not mentioned it in your letter to me."

"Let us not speak of it again, my friend," said Mrs. Duncan; "let us forget everything *you* desire to forget."

Stuart left the hotel after an hour, quite at ease in his conscience, and determined that he would prove henceforth how true and loyal a friend he could be to Mrs. Duncan, without being in the least a lover.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE YOUNG ACTRESS.

MRS. NUFFER stood at her door in the early morning, engaged in conversation with the postman.

"Here's a letter for you, Mrs. Nuffer," said the postman, handing her the neat epistle which Fay Underhill had written according to her promise to Cornelia.

"How nice it smells!" said Mrs. Nuffer putting the letter to her spectacled nose. "Spices and frankincense and myrrh."

"Patchouly more like," said the postman, who knew Mrs. Nuffer and her peculiarities, and considered them a precious source of amusement. "And here's your *Christian Exhorter*, Mrs. Nuffer—two cents postage on that. I tell you

what, if you'd pay your postage quarterly in advance it would make me less trouble and save you considerable, too, Mrs. Nuffer."

"Far be it from me," said the old woman, stooping over and rummaging in the pocket of her rusty black dress, "to calculate on the chances of mortal life so fur as to pay postage fur three blessed months to come, when I may be in Abraham's bosom afore the time is half gone. We know not what a day may bring forth."

"Well, I wish you'd bring forth that two cents," said the postman, "for I've stopped here long enough already."

Here Mrs. Nuffer produced a small needle-case from her pocket, and said, "Lend me your knife."

"I haven't got any," said he.

"Never mind, I'll get my scissors," said Mrs. Nuffer, going within for the purpose; when she had found them she returned to the door, and plied away at the brass clasp of the little needle-case; for in this diminutive receptacle she kept her still more diminutive store of money. Having opened it, Mrs. Nuffer clasped her hands together and gave a little shriek of astonishment.

"I made sure I had a two-cent piece; but I haven't. No matter. The Lord will provide. I'll borry it."

"Hurry up now," said the postman, while Mrs. Nuffer crossed the passage-way and knocked at the door of a room looking on the street. There was

a scramble, and a noise as of pots and pans inside the room; and then the lovely face of a bright young girl, flushed with heat, as if she had been bending over the fire, appeared as it opened cautiously ajar; but the young girl smiled pleasantly when she caught sight of Mrs. Nuffer standing with the poor needle-book in her hand.

"Want a knife, Mrs. Nuffer?" said the girl with the smiling face—who was acquainted, it seemed, with the needle-book and its tiresome clasp that had to be wrenched open to disclose its emptiness.

"No, Rosalind, I want to borry a two-cent piece. Can you lend it to me for a short time?"

"Certainly," said Bright-eyes, immediately offering the coin, and then retiring inside her room.

When she had settled her dues with the postman, Mrs. Nuffer again knocked at the door opposite her own. This time her knock was answered by a feeble voice, evidently a woman's, and Mrs. Nuffer walked in.

"Any better this morning, Mrs. Golden?" asked Mrs. Nuffer, sitting down, with Fay's letter in her hand. Her question was addressed to a pale woman, well on in years, who was propped up in an easy-chair with pillows and cushions, and whom you soon observed was a paralytic. The bright-eyed girl was not to be seen, but the clatter of crockery ware in an inner room revealed her

whereabouts and occupation—she was washing up the morning's breakfast dishes.

"I got a letter this morning from Miss Fay Underhill, one of my customers, Mrs. Golden; you know you've often heard me speak of the Underhills, real nice folks as ever lived, and that rich!" here Mrs. Nuffer clasped her hands enthusiastically, and rolled her eyes up at the ceiling, as if it could testify to the richness and the real niceness of the Underhill family if it would but speak. "Not but what riches takes wings," she added, in a subdued voice.

"Yes, yes," answered Mrs. Golden, in the querulous tone of the confirmed invalid. "I know well enough who John W. Underhill is. You can't tell me much about John W. Underhill that I don't know. You never heard him speak of a certain Helen Wilson, did you?"

"No, I never did," answered Mrs. Nuffer, meekly.

"No, I'll be bound you didn't. These rich men don't trouble themselves long about poor girls like Helen Wilson. No matter, I don't say anything—as they're your friends, of course Mrs. Nuffer—" here Mrs. Nuffer sniffed, whether with pride or shame at having the Underhill family for friends was not exactly clear; "but the first time you feel the spirit move you to do the Lord's work that you're always so anxious about, just you tell John W. Underhill that when he wants to find

out what's become of Helen Wilson, why, that I can tell him."

Mrs. Nuffer looked as crushed and humbled as if the failure of John W. Underhill—to whom, by the way, she had never spoken a word—to do his duty toward Helen Wilson—a mere abstraction so far as Mrs. Nuffer was concerned—was her own, Mrs. Nuffer's, sole and particular fault.

"What's the matter?" said the bright-eyed girl, coming in from the other room with her cheery smile; "mother, are you scolding Mrs. Nuffer?"

Mrs. Golden settled herself back among her pillows, and vouchsafed no reply, while Mrs. Nuffer looked pathetically at the young girl and sniffed out laconically "John W. Underhill."

"What, that old affair again?" said the girl, with a light laugh. "Come, mother, do let John W. rest for a while. He hasn't been confessing his sins to you about Helen Wilson, has he, Mrs. Nuffer?"

"No," said Mrs. Nuffer; "confession without repentance and good works will not avail." Then she added, "I on'y got a note from Miss Fay this morning, telling me to come there and do some work."

"The thing which has happened so frequently before. I'm glad of it; you needed the job, didn't you?"

"Pocketbook is down to the needles now, Rosalind," said Mrs. Nuffer, holding it up to view.

"And needles are not very useful as currency. Well, Mrs. Nuffer, I suppose you'll be there all day, sewing for the ladies," said Rosalind.

"Yes, I suppose so, and if I get a chance I'll just speak to Mr. Underhill about Helen Wilson," said Mrs. Nuffer, resolutely.

"Yes, and get yourself turned out of the house for your pains," put in Mrs. Golden. "No—better leave it all alone. His punishment will overtake him some day."

"Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord," ejaculated Mrs. Nuffer, rising.

"Well I hope the Lord will remember this business," said Mrs. Golden.

The needle-book being, as Mrs. Nuffer said, destitute of everything except needles, Mrs. Nuffer was obliged to incur another small debt by borrowing enough to pay car fare to and from the house where she was going to pass the day. This she did with many apologies and a profuse quotation of Bible texts; and finally took her leave of the young and the old woman by reminding them that very probably one or both or all three of them would be dead before night, and to bear themselves accordingly.

As soon as the door had closed behind their pious friend, Rosalind Golden locked it carefully, and after giving her mother's pillows and cushions a fresh shaking-up, that the invalid might rest the more comfortably, she opened a bureau-drawer

and took therefrom a cap and apron whose fantastic smartness of ribbons and frills contrasted strangely with the poor and sombre room in which they were displayed.

"I'll finish trimming them while you are at rehearsal, Rosie," said the invalid holding out her hand for the gay trappings.

"The call is for half-past ten," answered the girl, a dark shadow creeping over her young face and the bright smile fading away; "I've still nearly an hour. I can finish it myself in that time, I think;" and taking up needle and thimble she proceeded rapidly with the work.

"Is your part good for anything in this new piece, my child?" inquired the mother, in a voice in which solicitude, care, pride, and ambition for the daughter were distinctly traceable.

"Oh no, only a few lines," the shadow on the face deepening into a frown; "I shan't set the North River on fire in this part, mother, so you needn't expect it," and the busy fingers flew on with their task.

"Well now, I don't know, Rosie," replied the mother in a comforting tone, "many a big hit has been made by people playing little bits that don't promise anything at rehearsal; but somehow they struck the audience at night. Why, I've heard that Dundreary was only a few lines in the way the piece was originally written, and that Sothern was so vexed at having to act such a poor part that

he went on and guyed it and to his astonishment made a great hit."

"I shall never make a hit in a part like this," said the girl, doggedly, "and never want to."

Seeing that for some reason or other there was deeper feeling at work here than usual, Mrs. Golden laid her emaciated hand on her daughter's shoulder, and gazing into her face as if to read it to its last word, she said:

"Why, child, what is the matter with this part?"

Rosalind lifted her eyes to her mother's, and Mrs. Golden saw they were swimming in tears.

"Rosie!"

Rosie buried her face in her mother's lap, and the poor white hand stroked the glossy hair while the young girl gave way to a paroxysm of tears. At length she mastered herself.

"Oh mother, it is such a dreadful part! Such a vile, *hateful* part! I don't see how I can have the face to speak the lines, though there are not more than a dozen of them. I didn't want to say anything about it to you, for I knew it would only worry you."

"You told me it was a French waiting-maid, and I said 'then you must have a white cap and apron trimmed with pink satin ribbon.'"

This was Mrs. Golden's part in the drama of life. To sit from day to day imprisoned in this room and this chair, living only for and through

her daughter—feeling her joys, her sorrows, her ambitions, and her disappointments; waiting with the announcement of every new piece to hear what was to be her daughter's part in it, that she might give forth her fiat in regard to what must be worn for such a part—or rather what Rosalind could select that would be nearest a correct costume, from the limited and somewhat shabby stage wardrobe which had once been the mother's and was now the daughter's—for Rosalind's parents had both been on the stage. For instance: court lady of the olden time (a wide scope)—black cotton velvet and stomacher covered with wax beads, many of which were broken. Fashionable lady of the present day—a faded blue silk with lace flounces, the toilet freshened with such adjuncts as French flowers and kid gloves, this latter a terrible item of expense when "society plays" were running. Peasant girls from all parts of the world indiscriminately (except Spain)—red merino petticoat and black velvet bodice. Spanish peasant—the same with the addition of veil and comb. Parts of all kinds in local pieces, except when portraying a heroine in "Society"—the clothing she wore every day, a black alpaca mostly, in various stages of respectability. French waiting-maid from the time of Louis XIV. down to the present day—the gown at discretion, *but*, white cap and apron trimmed with pink satin ribbon.

"Yes, I told you it was a French waiting-maid,

and I didn't want to tell you any more than that. I really didn't comprehend how bad the part was until we had rehearsed the play once or twice. The whole piece is perfectly vile. I wonder how decent people can come to the theatre to hear such things. I hope it will be a dead failure."

"But, what is it that's so bad about your part?" asked Mrs. Golden.

"In the first place she's an impudent minx, always giving pert replies to everybody that speaks to her—the very antipodes of my nature to begin with; in the next, she's employed by the gentleman of the house to spy upon his wife and does so; and brings back a horrible story that makes the husband shoot the lover, and the father-in-law shoot the husband, and a lot more such trash. But the worst is, that this waiting-maid is as vile as anybody, and when she is charged with it, instantly acknowledges it and says, 'I only followed the example of my betters.'"

"How shocking!" said the poor mother, her eyes now filled with tears at the knowledge that her Rosie had to submit to such a trial; "can't you get out of speaking that one line, Rosie?"

"I tried to do so, and hard, I can tell you. I went to the prompter and asked him if I couldn't cut that line out. He said, no of course not, that was somebody's cue to speak; then I said couldn't we arrange another cue for them to speak on; and *then* it turned out that that is the cue for the

leading man's great speech in the play, and my line about 'following the example of my betters' is the key-note which sets him off into a long rigmarole in which he rants and tears about the stage, philosophizing about woman's fall from virtue, and all sorts of disgusting things, and every once in a while he makes a climax by pointing at me and saying to the audience, '*This* vile creature! *This* abandoned waiting-maid! No, no, pity my wife, she is frail but fair; let all your execration fall on Toinette the waiting-maid, who is neither virtuous nor pretty!'"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Golden, moving restlessly in her chair, too much affected to see anything laughable in this translated balderdash; "I've been connected with the profession forty years and I never heard of such things."

"They say it is very delicate and clever in the French," continued Rosalind bitterly, as she abstractedly fashioned the bright bows of ribbon which were to accompany her during her moments of degradation; "but in the English it's dreadful—I can find no other word for it. I went to the stage-manager when the rehearsal was over and said to him, 'Mr. Steele, how can you expect a girl to stand on the stage and have such things said about her as that? Can't you let me off?' He saw I was almost crying, and he spoke very kindly. He said, 'Miss Golden, there is really no help for it. It must be very galling, of course, for

you to play such a part, but you must look at these things purely in the artistic light. Now Charles Kean was as fine a man personally as I ever met, yet he thought he hadn't played Iago well when he didn't get hissed."

"There's a good deal of difference between Charles Kean and you," said the mother, indignantly.

The girl smiled grimly. "Yes, I should think so; also between Iago and Toinette the waiting-maid. However, that's neither here nor there. I tried again. I said 'Oh, Mr. Steele, if you'll only let me cut out that one line'— Then up stalks the author, a disagreeable creature, who smells of brandy and who has been lording it around the stage ever since the piece was put in rehearsal—cursing the people when they got their exits and entrances wrong, and that, too, before it was at all settled whether we were to use the centre doors or the wings as entrances."

"Coarse wretch!" muttered Mrs. Golden, her thin face now flushed, now pale, with the emotions the recital awakened.

"Says he, 'What's this talk about cutting out my lines—*my* lines!' (They say the piece is a translation, word for word, from the French—not an original line in it," interjected Rosie.) "'Can't I cut out that line?' said I, showing him the line in my part. 'No!' roared he, in a voice you could have heard in the flies, '*No*—decidedly not!'

Then, turning to the stage-manager, he said, ' Mr. Steele, isn't there a regulation in this theatre, which permits the manager to discharge any member of the company who takes the liberty of cutting lines out of his part ? ' "

" Discharge ! " echoed Mrs. Golden, her voice faint with fear.

" Oh, don't be frightened, mother," said Rosalind, soothingly, " we're not going to starve just yet. Mr. Steele spoke right up and said ' We discharge people who refuse to play parts they're cast for, which Miss Golden has not done. You must speak the line, Miss Golden—good-morning.' That was the end of it. I could say no more. We play the piece for the first time to-night and I heard them say yesterday that every seat in the house was sold already. Well, these things are done," added the poor girl, making an effort to call back the bright smile and holding up the insignia of all French waiting-maids (according to Mrs. Golden's idea) in the shape of the white cap and apron with pink satin ribbons.

" Ah, dear," sighed Mrs. Golden, " how I wish you could get off the stage, since you hate it so."

" So do I," said Rosalind, " but if wishes were horses, beggars would ride. I wish I could get off the stage, and I wish I could find something else to do that would bring us in as much money as this does. I get fifteen dollars a week, and I've

the constant hope of getting my salary raised. Our leading lady gets a hundred dollars a week; and Miss Edenstone who is only a novice and they say played for nothing at first, but made a hit in one of these society plays last winter, has now got a piece of her own written to fit her peculiarities, and is going starring with it; they say she's already got engagements ahead which will insure her ten thousand dollars for her season's profit."

"I wish somebody would write you a piece and set you out starring," groaned Mrs. Golden.

"I suppose this horrid man would translate me a play from the French if I could pay him for it," said Rosalind, "and then I see Mr. Tony McDougall hanging around the lobbies every day; they say he is looking out for some attraction to take around the country. However, all this is beyond my power of accomplishment. And stock actress or star actress, I shall always hate the stage, despise it, loathe it."

"You've tried to get something else to do," said Mrs. Golden, weeping, "but always failed."

"Yes, everything is overrun," said Rosalind. "Salaries for those who are fortunate enough to get them are beggarly. Look at poor Mrs. Nuffer—the neatest sempstress I ever saw, hard-working, living in one little dark back room, cheese and bread and tea her principal diet, yet half the time she hasn't a single penny in her poor little needle-book."

"As was the case this morning," added Mrs. Golden. "Poor Mrs. Nuffer! She doesn't know a word about your being on the stage yet, does she, Rosie?"

"No," answered the girl, the shadows again falling, and blotting out the brightness in her face. "She must find it out for herself, and then we must take the consequences of her discovery. Heigho! I suppose she'll be horrified, and cut loose from us."

"She knows well enough what a dear, good, angelic girl you are, Rosie," said Mrs. Golden, with all a mother's tenderness.

"She knows us all just as we are—you and me and Purdy. Yet you know how most of these good religious folks, church members are. Ten to one when she finds out that I'm on the stage she'll fly from me as if I was a pariah." Poor Rosie's eyes were hot with tears again. It seemed ridiculous to display any emotion over the prospective loss of the society of the lugubrious, impecunious Nuffer. Yet poverty cherishes its friends, poor and humble though they be.

"How does she suppose we live?" asked Mrs. Golden.

"Well, she knows brother sells books on the trains and I suppose she thinks he earns enough to support us all."

"Poor, dear little Purdy!" exclaimed Mrs. Golden, brimming over with tenderness now for

her absent son, "he hasn't saved enough yet to buy himself a new suit which he needs so badly."

"I'm trying to save something out of my salary to help him get that; he needs it to be presentable enough to go on the trains. He'll be in at noon to-day, I suppose; won't he, mother?"

"Yes, I expect him then."

"Now, mother, be sure you don't let him know how badly I feel about this part; and keep him away from the theatre as long as this piece is running. He'll stay with you if you tell him you need him. He would die with shame to see me play this disgusting thing. It galls him so to think I'm on the stage, anyway."

"Yes, he hates it as much as you do."

"It is time for me to be off, now," said Rosalind, laying the cap and apron away in the bureau-drawer.

There was a knock at the door, and Rosalind cautiously opened it.

"Give you good-morrow, fair gentlewoman," cried a rich, manly voice as Rosie opened the door and disclosed to her mother's view the handsome face and form of a young man, dressed in the height of fashion, and whose elegant appearance was greatly at variance with the poor abode in which he found himself.

"Good-morning, Mr. Perrin, good-morning," said the invalid, brightening up; "won't you walk in?"

"Thank you, not this morning. I am on my way to rehearsal, now. We are called for half-past ten sharp—no ten minutes grace. I called here to escort Miss Rosalind to the theatre."

"Thank you. I'll be ready in half a minute," said Rosalind, all smiles again. After a minute or two devoted to her toilet in the inner room, she emerged, kissed her mother good-by, and in company with Mortimer Perrin, widely known and admired as the fascinating light comedian of the West End Theatre, she made her way to that temple of the muses, and behind its dusky scenes.

CHAPTER XX.

A SOCIETY COMEDY.

On the evening of this day, at precisely fifteen minutes before eight, Major Cheraw drove up to the door of the Underhill mansion in a handsome hackney-coach. Sending his name to the ladies by the grinning Jo, the major entered the pleasant parlor, and occupied himself in the dexterous business of getting a snugly fitting glove on his one hand.

"Let me button it, Major," cried Fay, tapping him on the shoulder with her fan; and turning, the

major found himself in presence of Fay, Cornelia, and Mrs. Underhill. John W. was not going.

"I shall never have the heart to undo that which your fair fingers have put together, Miss Fay," said the gallant major, bowing profoundly as pretty Fay buttoned his glove.

"Dear me, Major, then you'll be obliged to sleep in your glove," cried Cornelia.

"I think we are ready now," said Mrs. Underhill; and so they entered the coach and drove to the theatre.

They found every indication of a great crowd. A long line of men stretched from the box-office far out into the street; carriages were trundling up, disgorging their loads, and rapidly driving off again under the direction of policemen; and inside the house, the pleasure-seekers were obliged to move a step at a time, so great was the crush. Once they had reached their roomy box, however, our party were very comfortable, and began immediately to scrutinize the assemblage, in search of acquaintances.

"Is not that Lord de Coram, opposite?" asked the major, standing up behind the ladies and using his opera-glass.

"No, it cannot be," said Cornelia.

"Why, how do you know, Cornelia?" asked Fay.

"Lord de Coram is in Washington, paying his respects to the President, and visiting some mem-

bers of the diplomatic corps. Can you conceive it possible that Lord de Coram should be in New York and not call and pay his respects to me?"

Fay looked at her beautiful friend, but the pearly cheek of Cornelia was an unreadable page. All present had heard the rumors of the engagement of marriage between de Coram and Cornelia; but Cornelia had made no confidences on this subject, not even to Fay.

"Beautiful audience!" said the major, as the brilliant crowd of a first night settled in their places, and a well-drilled band of musicians played the exquisite overture to "Poet and Peasant."

The curtain arose on a magnificent drawing-room, and the action of the play began. It lay principally in the hands of the leading man, who was rather inclined to tear a passion to tatters as an injured husband; the leading lady, a fine artist, superbly costumed, whose intensely sympathetic nature enabled her to play upon her audience as a musician plays upon his instrument; a thoroughly good fellow, rich, lazy, indolent, harming nobody, liked by all, deliciously personated by Mortimer Perrin; and an insolent and almost shabbily dressed waiting-maid, of whom we have already some knowledge.

"Now there *is* somebody we know," exclaimed Fay, cordially bowing her head toward a point in the orchestra chairs, during the first *ent'racte.* Cornelia looked, but could see no one she knew.

"It was that pleasant German gentleman Mr. Underhill liked so much, and who played the piano and sang so delightfully at your party, Cornelia," said Mrs. Underhill.

"Mr. Kalbfleisch?"

"Yes, Mr. Kalbfleisch," said Fay; "bright and sunny as ever."

"I wish I had seen him," said Cornelia.

There was a low rap at the box door, and the major opened it. Mrs. Underhill arose and cordially greeting the new-comer (who was no other than Hermann himself), presented him to Major Cheraw, to whom he bowed, and at once flitted to the ladies, as a butterfly seeks honey.

"Oh, ladies," he exclaimed, "I tink so much aboud you all de vile. I valk in Broadway efery tay and tink perhaps I meet you to-morrow."

"We are seldom there except for shopping," said Fay, "and even then we don't walk."

"Why did you not call at the house, Mr. Kalbfleisch?" asked Mrs. Underhill, kindly. "We should have been glad to see you."

"Oh, tank you," said the German, his pink face flushing deeply with pleasure; "but I could not take so much liberties; and efery tay I had ought to leafe for Chigago. I yoost stay to hear de obera once, den I go, sure. You didn't get some letters vrom Miss Pony, did you, ladies?"

Neither of the girls had heard from Pony, who was a most eccentric correspondent—writing once

or twice a year at most, and then as likely as not writing twenty pages.

"Oh, if I could yoost see Miss Pony once," cried Hermann; but meeting the cool and critical eyes of Major Cheraw he restrained his tell-tale enthusiasm. "Mrs. Underhill," he continued, addressing himself to the elderly lady, "are you going to hear La Pittaluga ven she make her *début* in *Trovator* next Wednesday?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Underhill. "Girls, I forgot to tell you. Mr. Underhill told me this evening, just as I was leaving the house, that he had got one of the stockholders' boxes for Madame Pittaluga's *début*."

"Oh, how nice!" exclaimed both the young ladies.

"Ladies," said Hermann, after a pause, "von't you took pity on a poor veller dot must go back putty soon next week to Chigago, and write Miss Pony dot she come over for La Pittaluga's *début?* Den I see her dere—at obera. Not?"

There was no mistaking the state of this case. The young German was deeply in love, and with their little scapegrace friend.

"That might be managed," said Fay. "I'll write to her."

"Oh, tank you. Now I must go—the next act vill begin."

"Come and see us, Mr. Kalbfleisch," said Mrs. Underhill.

"Mit bleasure, madam. Ladies!" and Hermann put his hat in front of his breast and bowed to them; "Major!" another bow to the major; then a general one to the company, and Hermann returned to his seat in the stalls.

A beautiful bosky scene of park and river view brought forth the plaudits of the audience, as the curtain rose for the second act. Then followed a scene of amusing *nonchalance*, played to perfection by Mortimer Perrin.

"Isn't he admirable—that fellow?" exclaimed Cornelia with an enthusiasm rare with her.

"Deuced good form for an actor," said the major, nodding his head approvingly.

The plot of the piece, unpleasantly suggestive from the first, now developed into such undisguised immorality that Mrs. Underhill grew very uneasy, and looked at her watch more than once.

"Is it not amazing," said Fay, whispering in Cornelia's ear, "that a pretty and modest-looking girl like that one playing the waiting-maid can be so shameless as to enact such a horrid part?"

Just then came the famous line which had caused so much dispute.

"I only followed the example of my betters."

It was almost inaudible; but the leading actor's great speech was not. Far from it: he raved and stamped and tore his hair, and appealed to the audience to duly execrate the vile underling who stood before them in white cap and apron

trimmed with pink satin ribbons; and the latter, obliged to scrupulously perform the "business" set down for her at rehearsal, scowled and sneered and tossed her head, and conducted herself generally in the most outrageous manner. Then the curtain fell, and in answer to applause the leading man came out and bowed his thanks, puffing and blowing, as they loudly cheered him. Nobody paid any attention to the waiting-maid.

"What is that horrid creature's name?" asked Cornelia.

"The man or the girl?"

"The girl."

Then they picked up the bill and read together:

"Toinette, a waiting maid—Miss Rosalind Golden."

"Major Cheraw," said Mrs. Underhill, rising, "you'll excuse me if I say we've had enough of this."

"Oh certainly," said the major. "This piece is a bore."

Mrs. Underhill took the major's arm, and the girls followed close behind. When they descended to the lower floor Cornelia felt a tight grasp on her wrist, and looking around, saw Fay's face, white as a ghost, staring straight into an uncovered private box, whose gaslights, dimmed as they were, nevertheless revealed the presence therein of Stuart Phelps and Mrs. Duncan. Mrs. Underhill saw him too, and her motherly eyes were opened.

CHAPTER XXI.

ENEMY OR FRIEND?

QUESTIONED lovingly by her father and her mother, all poor Fay would confess was that there had been a rupture between herself and Stuart, which had taken place soon after they left Long Branch. What Lord de Coram had divulged to her she forbore to tell her parents. She loved Stuart Phelps too dearly, in spite of all, to expose him to their contempt.

"Poor Stuart!" said poorer Fay, with tears in her eyes, "he is more sinned against than sinning. That dreadful woman from California has stolen him from me—yes, just *stolen* him."

Mr. John W. Underhill had some tart reply on his lips concerning the absurdity of stealing a man in this way unless he wished to be stolen; but seeing plainly that this bit of sarcasm would only wound Fay, an innocent darling, who was really in this affair all sinned against and not in the least a sinner, he forbore to utter it. But he kissed the girl tenderly, wiped away her tears and bestowed upon her some such profound bit of parental advice as "Never mind!" Then, passing into

another room under pretence of getting a pair of gloves, he whispered in his wife's ear that he should take the liberty of calling upon Mr. Stuart Phelps this very morning, and see about this thing.

That liberty he took. That thing he saw about.

"Will you be good enough, sir," said John W., laying aside his hat in Stuart's office, "to explain your conduct to my daughter?"

"With pleasure, Mr. Underhill, if you will be good enough to explain your daughter's conduct to *me*."

"My daughter, sir, has done nothing," cried Mr. Underhill, angrily.

"I beg your pardon, sir," answered Stuart. "She has written me a letter—when we had parted the best of friends—saying that everything was over between us."

"That was when your conduct with this California woman had become shameless in the extreme," said John W., unwisely.

Stuart's blood tingled to his finger-tips. "Mr. Underhill," he cried, "I have not only your age to remember—I have the memory of long years of friendship with you and your family to look back upon; but if another man had said such a thing as this to me I should not feel the least scruple in showing him the door. 'This California woman,' as you insultingly call Mrs. Duncan, I have found to be an extremely ladylike and I believe an innocent person; my conduct towards her—my relations

with her—are as irreproachable as they are with any lady I know. I believe her to be a most persecuted and slandered lady—and the only reason for it, so far as I can see, is that she is beautiful and attractive and all the other women are jealous of her."

"Do you mean to say that my daughter Fay would stoop to being jealous of such a person?"

"Why, sir," answered Stuart, calmly, "if that were all there was about it the thing would be easily settled. Fay might very naturally and without loss of dignity be jealous of Mrs. Duncan,—or rather of me,—as I might be, and have been, jealous of Fay; such things between young people who are engaged are common enough, I suppose, and easily explained away; but what I seriously object to in this business is that there has been a disposition shown to lord it over me in a way no man of spirit could stand. I will not be driven nor commanded, but I am open to reason or expostulation, or coaxing."

"None of which you will get from me, sir," testily replied Mr. Underhill, taking his hat and his departure.

Now the truth was Stuart Phelps was the unhappiest person concerned in the imbroglio. He was no more in love with Mrs. Duncan than you are, and consequently took but a moderate satisfaction in her company. In ordinary circumstances the acquaintance between them would have been suf-

fered to die a natural and easy death; but as circumstances now were it had become almost a point of honor that he should keep up the acquaintance—partly out of that pride which makes a man do a thing which others choose to consider wrong in him, simply because he knows he is right, and means to show that he is his own master; and partly out of the feeling that he had not dealt fairly by Mrs. Duncan, that she had been wronged and insulted, first by himself and then by his friends, and now he was going to stand up for her. This involved going to theatres with her, being seen in the street with her, and in fact finally assuming that sort of an attitude towards her which made his young men acquaintances understand he was Mrs. Duncan's friend and would defend her reputation. The result of all this naturally was, that Mrs. Duncan was gossiped about behind Stuart's back, and it generally chanced that he was also gossiped about in the same connection.

All this made its impression on Stuart. He felt he was misjudged, misunderstood, his motives misconstrued, and he was a very unhappy young man generally.

A most disturbing circumstance connected with the business was that Stuart almost daily received anonymous letters relating to his visits, walks, and general acquaintanceship with Mrs. Duncan. These had begun to arrive the very first day after he met her in the picture-gallery and walked home with

her. They were written in a large, legible handwriting, evidently that of a business man, and, betraying no signs of the vulgar ignorance which we are accustomed to link with the idea of anonymous letters, informed him in the plainest words that the California widow in whom he was taking so marked an interest was a person unworthy his regard and indeed unfit to be the associate of any one who held his own good character dear. Believing this to be but another of the many arrows of persecution for which Mrs. Duncan seemed to be the target, and on the general principle that anonymous letters are unworthy even perusal, Stuart tried to ignore them. But the strangest thing about the matter was that the writer seemed to know, not only everything concerning Mrs. Duncan's past and present movements, but every movement of Stuart's in relation to her. Yesterday he sent her a bouquet—that was known; day before yesterday he called and stayed over an hour—the very minutes were noted; indeed, the very tenor of their conversation, if not correctly reported, was pretty accurately guessed at by the author of the anonymous missives.

Stuart was puzzled over them, every time one of them arrived—containing as they did references to points in Mrs. Duncan's life which she had confided to him with promises of secrecy exacted; allusions to her husband, and to different law cases which had brought him in enormous fees; and other evi-

dences of life-long knowledge of the woman who was causing them all—the writer of the anonymous letters included his mysterious self in this unhappy catalogue—so much trouble.

On the day Mr. Underhill had "taken the liberty" to call on Stuart to "see about that thing," one of the anonymous letters had arrived, as usual; for, as has been said, their receipt was a matter of almost daily occurrence now. The present letter was not much more offensive, not any more mysterious than the others; but coupled with Mr. Underhill's visit, the consciousness that he, Stuart, had widened the breach instead of narrowing it, ("Why didn't I cry *mea culpa* at once to the old man? It could never have hurt me," soliloquized Stuart)—the writer's words pricked like a javelin. This is the way it read:

"You will go into Diana Duncan's presence again to-day, and again she will ply you with words sweet as honey, such as she has already poured into the ears of a man who loves her devotedly and always will. You are watched every minute; you needn't be too sure that your very words are not heard. Walls are thick, to be sure, and the hotel where my lady stops would oust suspicious-looking intruders mighty quickly; but money will do a great deal, and with negro waiters and Irish chambermaids often accomplishes wonders. I warn you once for all that you'd better stop calling on Mrs. Duncan. Where she came from, pistols were made

to shoot with, not to lie in velvet cases and be looked at; and with an ounce of lead under your commanding forehead, I don't think you'd be quite so lively."

There was something exasperating in all these anonymous missives; but this was the first time the writer had menaced violence, and Stuart's blood boiled at the idea that the fellow could think to frighten him with such cheap threats. As soon as he was free to leave business on that afternoon, he jumped into a stage and went to the hotel.

"Is Mrs. Duncan in?" asked he of Marcia, who, according to her usual custom, opened the door about two inches when there was a knock and peered out cautiously through her spectacles.

"Yes, sir," said she, now opening the door wide enough for him to enter.

"Tell her I'd like to see her," said Stuart, throwing himself upon a sofa, feeling tired and sick, mind and body.

Enter Mrs. Duncan; exit Marcia: the inevitable programme.

When the widow saw Stuart lying on the sofa she flew to his side and placed her soft hand on his forehead.

"Are you ill?" she inquired, anxiously. "What can I get for you?"

"Nothing, thank you," he replied, almost savagely; "no wine, nor spirits, not even as medi cine."

"It biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder," quoted she, in a facetious tone of voice.

"That's Gospel truth, if any ever was," cried he, sitting bolt upright. Then without another word he placed the anonymous letter of to-day in her hands.

Mrs. Duncan read the letter through, and then burst into a flood of tears. Stuart had never seen her so terribly affected. "Oh, oh," wept she; and through her tears she said, "this is what I feared—just what I feared!"

"More persecution?" inquired Stuart in a tone which would have been satirical, except that it was rather too savage.

"Yes, and the worst, the worst," said Mrs. Duncan; "Stuart, the moment has come when I must tell you all. This letter is from the hands of my most relentless enemy."

"What a number of them you have!" observed Stuart, grimly, and almost wishing he was numbered with them instead of with her friends. "And what is the name of *the* most relentless?"

Mrs. Duncan rose to her feet, and pressed her hand hard on her breast. "Oh," said she, "I had hoped I might keep this at least from you—but I see it is my lot to drink the bitter cup to the dregs. This letter is in the same handwriting as letters which come to me from California—from the man who persecutes me with his love; and seeks to frighten me into being his wife."

"And his name?"

"His name is Buck Williams," said Mrs. Duncan in a tragic tone.

"Buck Williams!" repeated Stuart, "Jove! what a name for a relentless enemy!—sounds like the end man at the minstrels."

"I am glad it amuses you," said she, greatly piqued.

"If you think getting a letter like that with my mail every morning is amusing, you're very much mistaken," said Stuart, dolefully. "I don't like mysteries and imbroglios. If it is Mr. Buck Williams who writes these letters to me, and if you are in correspondence with that amiable person, who talks about putting bullets behind my forehead, be good enough to tell him that if he has any rights to you that other men are bound to respect, why that I for one will respect them."

"Oh, Stuart!" cried the widow, "how dreadful it is to hear you talk in this cynical tone. It is not like you. You don't mean it, Stuart. *I* correspond with him? I hate and loathe him. I didn't know he was in New York at all—I left San Francisco to be rid of him."

"What is he? Who is he?" asked Stuart.

"He is a man who has followed me up ever since my husband's death, pouring his love-story in my ears till he has almost driven me wild. I am afraid of him. He is a desperate character—a gambler, and oh! everything that is bad."

"Drinks, I suppose?" queried Stuart, with irony; but to this Mrs. Duncan made no reply.

"I don't see how he can be in New York," she went on, "unless he has just arrived; for I got a letter from him from San Francisco only a day or two ago—such a terrible letter. He has written me just the same kind of a letter every month since last August, when I went to Long Branch—where I met *you*. At first his letters only made me indignant and defiant, but lately I have begun to feel afraid. And now that he includes *you* in his threats—oh, what have I done to be so persecuted?" Here the widow began to cry again.

"I care nothing for his threats," said Stuart.

"Ah, you don't know him," said Mrs. Duncan, raising her head. "I will show you his last letter. I have opened my whole heart to you now, and will conceal nothing, however galling to my pride."

She produced a letter from her pocket, and Stuart read it.

"My dear Diana," it began, and it was filled with expressions of attachment, couched in a curiously expressive language, half slang, half grim-death-like earnestness. And it concluded in these words:

"I've told you every time I've written to you, and now I tell you again—when I get tired of writing to you I'm going after you to fetch you back. You'll come back, no fear—because I want you. And then, if you ever leave me again,—fair

warning !—I'll empty my Colt into you as sure as my name's Buck Williams."

"Good Heavens, what a wretched brute!" cried Stuart, when he had read this passage.

"Can you wonder now," said Mrs. Duncan, "that I am unhappy?"

"I wonder you don't fly to the ends of the earth," said Stuart, with genuine concern for her.

"He would follow me there," said Mrs. Duncan.

Stuart examined the letter more carefully, and compared the handwriting with that of his anonymous correspondent. Presently he said, "Mrs. Duncan, I am something of an expert in chirography, and it is my opinion that Mr. Buck Williams is not the person who is writing anonymously to me."

"Why, to me the handwriting seems exactly the same."

"It is a very close imitation," said Stuart, "but it is not the same."

Mrs. Duncan looked frightened. "Then," said she, "I can't imagine who it can be."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE WORLD WITHIN THE WORLD.

La Pittaluga was one of those excellent singers, of whom Italy is full, who never lack for an engagement, and are now at Milan, now at Florence, and even sometimes at Paris or London, but generally in these two great capitals merely as a singer on the off-nights of some great *diva* with whose fame the world is ringing. Her voice was pleasantly mellow, well-trained, and of a sufficiently extensive range to enable her to get through the stock operatic *repertoire;* its chief drawback was a *tremolo* which showed itself most disagreeably whenever she had to sustain a note, and made her, as Pony Parsons expressed it, "too shaky."

"Pity she wobbles so on the long notes, isn't it?" said Pony to her friends when the curtain had fallen on an act on the night of Madame Pittaluga's *début*.

"Yas," said Kalbfleisch, who heard "wobble" for the first time, and understanding from the connection exactly what it meant, took it to be a perfectly legitimate word, "dot is not good, to vobble in de *Trovator*."

"He, he, he!" giggled Lord de Coram, sitting on his leg on a small satin *divan* in the back of the roomy box. "By Jove! You are the most amusing fellow, Kalbfleisch. I'd like to take you back to London as a natural curiosity; will you come?"

"No," answered the German, laughingly; "cause ven ve goes to de Zoological Gardens and de keeper grab hold of you to gif you to Mr. Darwin, den your mudder she be mad at me and she say to me, 'Hermann, vy didn't you took better care mine little boy ven you knows he can't took care himself?' Not?"

"Bravo!" cried de Coram, gently squeezing his own ankle, and rocking himself backwards and forwards by this means in a pleasant manner, "I like chaff."

"There's the curtain going up," said Cornelia, taking her seat again beside Fay and Mrs. Underhill in the front of the box.

"Oh, you needn't pay any attention to this," said Major Cheraw, standing behind them as usual, and holding a dainty pearl opera-glass in his well-gloved hand; "this is only a male chorus who are going to howl at us for ten minutes or so —all the lager-bier servers in town *en congé* for the night."

"Everybody is here, Cornelia," whispered Fay, looking at the auditorium through her opera-glass.

"There's Stuart Phelps," said Cornelia, low to

her, gazing fixedly in a directly opposite direction from that where Stuart was sitting.

"Yes," whispered Fay, "I saw him as soon as we came in. Wasn't that man at Long Branch who is sitting next him? His face is familiar."

It was N. B. Wiggins of Oshkosh, who chanced to have a seat next Stuart's in the parquet. But Cornelia did not remember him in the least.

"There's Mrs. Barham—your aunt, Mr. Kalbfleisch," said Fay.

"Yas," said Hermann. "I sawed her. By und by ven dot act don't play, I go over dere und tells her how she doos."

And when the act drop fell, Hermann bowed himself out and went over to speak to his aunt, who, dressed in a fashion which would have been girlish for a maiden of eighteen, was sitting in a box in company with five persons whom she had invited to accompany her. Two of these were a gentleman and his wife who were rich, but self confessedly not of the New York *ton*, being manufacturers out of Connecticut, and intensely anxious to get into society, whither they imagined the blue-blooded Mrs. Barham could transport them at her pleasure. The remaining three were a certain Mrs. Drillmajee and her two marriageable daughters whom we saw at Long Branch, whither they had gone for the sixth season, only to return as unmarried as before. The condition of these people was something truly pitiful—contemptibly

pitiable. They were in fact nothing more than beggars, mulcting hard-working relations for the money which they used to flaunt such finery as they could lay hands on, at Long Branch, Saratoga, or in Broadway; always in the wild hope of marrying off one or both of two exceedingly plain and unattractive girls to rich men upon whose shoulders the support of these extravagant do-nothings was to be immediately transferred. The defunct Drillmajee had been in fair business in New York, and while he lived, his wife and two daughters basked in the sweet idleness for which their natures seemed so eminently fitted; they promenaded Broadway dressed in the last "agony;" they gave dreadful parties in the semi-fashionable boarding-house where they lived, to which they invited the boarders *en masse* and such stray outsiders as had somehow got the idea that the Drillmajees were "somebodies;" they walked in a mincing way, and talked in a drawling way; and fancied themselves altogether of a superlative elegance. They never read a book, and almost never even looked at a newspaper, unless it were to gloat over some fashions account. Being utterly brainless themselves, they took refuge for their brainlessness behind a giggling supercilious-ness of manner toward people of brains, and even went so far, hollow shams that they were, themselves standing on the thin lava crust of a volcano bed in regard to money, as to despise people who

were poor—while the very servant girl who made their beds for them was richer than they, because she paid her debts. The only deity they worshipped was fashion—"Sassi-ity," as they pronounced it, with a drawl on the long i—and its attendant, dress; and to try to converse with them upon any other subject was as futile as to endeavor to chat with a Chinaman on the workings of the electoral college. The Drillmajees are personally of no account whatever, either in this history or elsewhere, but as they are types of a large class of useless insects who flit their clumsy wings in the butterfly kingdom of New York, they are curious, though unpleasant, as studies. When *feu* Drillmajee departed, there was weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth; not exclusively performed by his widow and daughters, but also by indignant tradespeople to whom bills were owing, and by the landlady of the semi-fashionable boarding-house, who had received no pay from them for two months. They had not money enough to bury the poor, dead creature, who had never expected to die, presumably, as he had made no provision for that event, either in a pecuniary or spiritual sense; and in this terrible crisis one of the man's relations came from the country, and buried him decently and gave a hundred dollars to the widow.

That was enough—in the sense of giving Mrs. Drillmajee a hold on the unfortunate benefactor,

though very far from enough to satisfy her wants and demands. From that moment this relation had been coaxed, cajoled, threatened, frightened—by promises of suicide and other desirable catastrophes—into letting them have divers sums of money, earned in a rude neighborhood by wearing toil, saved from daily necessities by biting economies—things of whose existence or possibility these three shallow-pates knew nothing and cared less. At length it had come to reproaches because the sums were so small.

"You are keeping us in *penury!*" wrote Mrs. Drillmajee.

"What right have I to be keeping you at all?" retorted the man.

The only plan now was to delude him into the belief, that one of the girls was soon to be married to a rich man who would assume all his wife's debts, among which these "borrowed" sums were to take the first place. This was really a tempting consideration to the unfortunate creditor; and to bring about the desirable marriage so confidently spoken of by Mrs. Drillmajee, he again began to send them driblets of money, which they received with bitter expletives of contempt, very unlike the expressions of gratitude with which they besmeared him in their acknowledgments. As for the promised debt-liquidating husband, he was not visible to the naked eye; but of course the man in the country could not know that.

When Hermann entered the box at the opera, to which they had been invited by Mrs. Barham on the occasion of Madame Pittaluga's *début*, a certain look from the eyes of Mrs. Drillmajee announced to the attentive daughters that this was a target at which they were to shoot. Thus, after Mrs. Barham had greeted her well-dressed and good-looking nephew with much cordiality, and presented him to the Connecticut man and his wife, who bowed to him with sufficient *empressement*, though no untoward friendliness, Mrs. Drillmajee craned her neck forward and stretching out her thin hand and grasping that of Hermann's gushed forth with:—"Now, don't introduce your *chawming* nephew to *us*, Mrs. Barham! The girls and I know him well, and shall never forget him—don't we, girls? Long Branch you know—and your *chawming* playing and singing. Oh dear! we were perfectly *rawvee* by it, weren't we, girls? There's nothing they're singing here to-night can equal it—not even the Anvil Chorus, which is my particular favorite—and which I was per-fectly carried away by just now—wasn't I, girls?" To all which queries the rather mature girls wagged their heads and smiled and almost stuck their tongues out at the astonished Hermann, like two idiotic tea-shop mandarins as they were.

Hermann smiled; both at these grimaces of whose import he was entirely ignorant, and at the idea of any one liking the Anvil Chorus as it had

been sung that night by the most unmelodious of untrained voices, roaring away in false time with anvils which never rung a true note. Encouraged by his smile, Mrs. Barham chattered on :

" I suppose you have much finer opera than this in Germany ? " she said, with a smile which actually distorted her face, so forced was it.

" Yas, much better ; und goot deal cheaper dan dis too," answered Hermann.

Mrs. Barham moved uncomfortably in her chair. Fearing that Hermann might say something which she preferred her friends should not hear, she tried to make the current of conversation flow as she desired by observing :

" Oh, the seats where the aristocracy sit are just as expensive as these, in proportion to the scale of prices for everything there ; but you see the Germans are a music-loving people, and so there are low-priced seats where poor people go."

" Dat's vere I always vent," said Hermann, laughing and nodding cheerfully across the house to Pony who was looking at him.

Mrs. Barham whispered in Mrs. Drillmajee's ear : " Don't be astonished at anything he says ; he's very eccentric—a younger son, quarreled with the Baron his father, came to this country and made an enormous fortune for himself."

" Fortune ! Indeed ! He's not married, is he ? " inquired the mother of the two daughters, anxiously.

"Oh, no," answered Mrs. Barham.

This was enough—more than enough—for Mrs. Drillmajee; grasping the wrist of her younger daughter, she hissed in her ear:

"For Heaven's sake, Julia, do talk up to this man! What do you mean sitting there mum-chance like a fool? Be lively! Don't you hear he's rich and unmarried! Talk up to him."

Half bewildered, the girl cudgeled her poor brain for something to say, and then with a sort of ghastly liveliness she intended for coquetry, she gurgled forth the words:

"Does your family still inhabit its ancient cawstle on the Rhine, Mr. Kalbfleisch?"

This was the signal for one of Hermann's merry peals of silver laughter.

"Oh, no—mein fader was very poor man vat vorks a leetle vineyard on dat Rhine. Now he don't vork any more, nor any of mein family, 'cause I make money in de pork-packing beesiness in Chicago, und I yoost send dem poor folks enough to live on."

Mrs. Barham's face was as red as a poppy, and her nostrils dilated with anger. She was furious at her nephew for being so absurdly frank before these people who had been so impressed with the family grandeur through her long and assiduous endeavors. Now she had fallen from her high estate in their estimation. She fairly hated Hermann at this moment, and wished him

well back in his pork-packing Chicago. If he was going to behave like this on every occasion, how much better was he than the poor emigrants who came over in the steerage, and settled on Government lands in the far West?

Hermann's frankness won the heart of the Connecticut man at a single stroke, and further coquetry on the part of the anxious Drillmajee spinsters was effectually prevented by the two men engaging in an animated conversation relating to Chicago trade. Presently Hermann took his leave, and as he bowed to the Drillmajee trio with as much frigidity as his warm and impulsive nature would permit (for their manners had been extremely offensive to him, though he did not suspect what their motives might be for showing to him—almost an utter stranger—so much of that which the French call "effusion"), the marriageable daughters felt that one more husband had slipped through their fingers, and that, for a still longer period they must be contented to be kept in penury by the unfortunate relation who fought so lustily against the necessity for keeping them at all.

While these episodes were passing in the boxes, Stuart Phelps and N. B. Wiggins, finding themselves seated side by side in the parquet, were discussing this and that subject—Oshkosh, opera, politics—but principally the merits and charms of Madame Pittaluga, to whose success they were earnest contributors, vigorously applauding her

arias every one, Wiggins stamping with his boots on the floor, in a manner truly alarming. Thus outwardly carried away with enthusiasm, it was amusing to Stuart, to hear Mr. Wiggins's private opinion of Italian Opera.

"The durndest caterwauling, sir," said Take Notice, "that any tom fool ever set down to listen to. Folks have got an idea it's stylish to come here and perk theirselves up before a lot of other folks, and clap their hands; when if it wasn't something that was the cheese—fashionably speaking—you couldn't hire 'em to show their noses here. I like Pittylugy fust rate; she can take my hat, she can, sir, but jest because she's a pretty woman, and a nice woman, and not because she gets up there and squalls hog Latin, and flams herself around into the arms of that man with the spangled nightgown on. I was always dead set against nonsense, and to come here and listen to a play that's squalled at you in language you don't understand, jest takes the rag off the bush for jackassiness, according to my notion."

They waited, nevertheless, till the curtain fell on the last act of the noisy opera; the Underhill party had left much before the close, and as Wiggins and Phelps strolled through the crowd in the lobbies, Stuart looked into the weary faces of those about him, and wondered how many had really come because they liked it, and how many because it was "the cheese."

The two men turned into Fourteenth Street, and directed their steps toward Broadway. As they passed a corner of a cross street, they saw a man leaning heavily against the iron gate of a private residence, his clothing in so dishevelled a condition that it seemed flying to the winds, and his hat rolling disconsolately on the ground. As Wiggins and Phelps approached, to their intense astonishment, the man playfully lifted his leg as a bar to their passage, which member N. B. Wiggins, in a far less playful manner, smote smartly with his umbrella, a convenience which the Oshkosh lumberman had very unfashionably carried to the opera. Nothing wroth, the dishevelled man burst into a loud laugh, and after accosting them by their names added in a shout which might have been heard in Fifth Avenue :

" Cullyses, how's your nibbses ? "

Before he had given utterance to his pet salutation, both Wiggins and Phelps had recognized in the demoralized creature before them, the theatrical speculator Mr. Tony McDougall. Before they had time to salute him, however, Mr. McDougall, still in a voice to which the Anvil Chorus was *pianissimo*, inquired peremptorily of them if they were acquainted with Mr. Tony McDougall ; because if they were, they probably knew that he didn't amount to a row of pins ; that Madame Pittaluga had refused to travel with Tony McDougall, because Metzerott had said that Tony McDougall

didn't amount to a row of pins; and that Metzerott having said that Tony McDougall didn't amount to a row of pins, the goose of Tony McDougall might be said to be cooked; whereupon, seemingly in great joy at the achievement of this culinary effort, Mr. Tony McDougall wrested himself away from the iron gate as if it were holding him, and clasping his waist with one hand, and waving the other above his head, he began to dance a breakdown in the centre of the pavement, much to the inconvenience of the crowd of people from the opera.

Laughing heartily at the absurd spectacle, Wiggins lifted Mr. McDougall's hat from the ground, where it lay battered into shapelessness by the feet of passers-by, and clapping it on the drunken man's head, led him, with Stuart's assistance, into a neighboring lodging-house, where, after paying for his bed for the night, they left him, still asserting in a confused manner to no one in particular, that Tony McDougall didn't amount to a row of pins, and that the goose of Tony McDougall was, therefore, cooked.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PONY'S SURRENDER.

MRS. NUFFER was working by the day at the Underhill mansion. What with Cornelia's dress from Canada, and odds and ends for Mrs. Underhill, and this and that for Fay, she was kept busy for many days; and just as she saw her work drawing to a close, Pony arrived from Philadelphia "in rags," according to her own somewhat startling announcement. Mrs. Nuffer was again asked to stay on by the day, and was now in Pony's employ.

"Now, Nuffer," said Pony, using a familiar form of speech to the old woman whom she had never in her life seen before, and whom Fay, who had known her for years, always addressed as "Mrs."; "Nuffer, whatever you do, make my harness snug!"

Mrs. Nuffer had one guiding rule in dressmaking and an excellent rule it was—always to make things large enough. "It is easier to take in than to let out," said she in a mournful tone as if she were quoting a text. True, she was apt to carry her idea to excess, and thus to cut to waste much

excellent material; but this disaster, such as it was, had never been alarming enough to induce her to change her system. "I cut things ample big," she said, "then take in seams as necessary, here a little and there a little, in season and out of season."

On the day following the evening of Madame Pittaluga's *début*, Pony expected Hermann Kalbfleisch to call upon her at Fay Underhill's. Unfortunately she also had an engagement with a photographer which it was necessary she should keep, as she desired that one of the imperial cards, in the making of which she had stood blinking at the sun till she was moved to ask the artist if he hadn't a comfortable pair of blinders to lend her, should accompany a certain friend to his pork-packing haunts in Chicago. In this strait she ran to the friendly Nuffer; Cornelia and Fay had gone driving to the park, accompanied by Mrs. Underhill and Major Cheraw, and Pony by her own request was left at home.

"Nuffer," said Pony, getting very close to the old woman's side and looking fixedly in her tired eyes, "Nuffer, did you ever make yourself agreeable to a young man?"

Mrs. Nuffer was cutting at that moment, and cutting, it is fair to presume, "ample big." She paused with the open scissors suspended in the air, and said:

"Goodness gracious!"

"Don't swear, Nuffer," said Pony, mischievously.

"Swear!" ejaculated Mrs. Nuffer in horror. "Did I swear? Lord have mussy on me, I believe I did. Let your conversation be yea, yea, and nay, nay," continued Mrs. Nuffer, closing her scissors with a snap.

"All right, Nuff," said Pony, abbreviating still further, "anything to please you; but what I want to ask you is, would you make yourself agreeable to a young man to oblige a tortured Pony who can't trot in two roads at once, and is most uncommonly obfusticated with the existing order of circumstances."

"If you mean that you don't know which of two things to do, then I say go and read your Bible all the afternoon and fix it that way," said Mrs. Nuffer.

"What's the use of my reading the Bible, my pious and excellent Nuffer, when I already know it all through and through?" coolly answered the mendacious Pony.

"You do?" asked Mrs. Nuffer in very natural surprise.

"Every word," responded Pony; "could say it backwards with my eyes shut in the middle of the darkest night that ever blew."

"My sakes!" ejaculated Mrs. Nuffer in astonishment; "I wisht I could."

"Oh, you do very well," said Pony with a con-

descending nod, "you can quote—ahem! even better than I can. To tell the truth I never quote texts, for this reason—that if I once got going I'd just gallop right along and repeat the whole Bible, and that might not be pleasant to—ah—worldly people like"—the witch was going to say "Mr. and Mrs. Underhill," but she stopped and filled in the gap with, "Major Cheraw."

"It wouldn't hurt him none," said Mrs. Nuffer. "He's got to go one of these days. His arm's gone already."

The service which Pony desired Mrs. Nuffer to perform was simple enough. Though Pony hoped to be back in time to see Kalbfleisch, she yet feared the possibility of being detained at the photographer's, in which case it was most likely that Hermann would leave his card and depart, thus robbing her of the pleasure of seeing him for that day at least. As she knew he was soon to leave for Chicago—perhaps on the morrow—this was something not to be thought of; so she desired that Mrs. Nuffer—everybody else being absent—should keep on the lookout for Hermann's visit, and when he arrived should descend to the drawing-room, and by promises of Pony's speedy return and other agreeable converse, detain him. And after some persuasion, this Mrs. Nuffer consented to do.

Kalbfleisch arrived in due course, and Pony had not returned. Mrs. Nuffer, informed by a servant with the characteristic politeness of American

domestics, that "that Dutchy was downstairs," laid aside her sewing, arranged her neat cap a bit, and slipping on a black-silk apron, walked into the parlor.

Expecting the winsome form and face of Pony, Hermann was somewhat astonished at the apparition of respectable shabbiness which appeared in the person of the excellent Mrs. Nuffer; but he was too much accustomed to poor relations, and too kind-hearted besides, to do other than greet the good woman with the same distinguished politeness he would have shown Mrs. Underhill or Cornelia Cornwallis.

Requesting him to be seated, Mrs. Nuffer informed the visitor that Miss Parsons was out, but would soon return, and that she desired him to wait for her. This Hermann gladly consented to do; and began in his accustomed way of light and generally infectious happiness to chat with his elderly companion. He was astonished, indeed, at the gloomy character of her conversation; surprised to find she expected rain when the sun was pouring down glory in such streams that Hermann had to move his seat to escape it; but his wonder was beyond words when the good woman asked him what was his idea of the great plan of salvation, and whether he had yet made his peace with Heaven.

"For the wind bloweth where it listeth," said Mrs. Nuffer, "and life is a bubble."

Just then Pony appeared, breathless—having been told by a servant who was standing on the steps, that her visitor was within. She heard Mrs. Nuffer talking, and catching the drift of her discourse, rushed in to save Hermann.

"Nuffer," said she, "thanks, gracious Nuffer, that will do. I will attend to this young man's regeneration myself, Nuffer. Believe me, Nuffer, I will put him through his catechism at 2.30 speed. Good-by, Nuffer."

Nuffer retired, and Hermann caught Pony by both her tiny hands, and with a sunny smile said:

"So you go avay ven I come, eh? I am bad company for you. Not?"

For answer Pony drew her pictures from a neat parcel. "This is why I was not here to meet you," she said. Hermann was delighted with the photographs.

"Ah, dot is so nice, so nice!" he cried, enthusiastically.

"Well, I don't know," said she; "I think this off eye looks rather queer; don't you?"

"No; it is beautiful. I takes it mit me to Chigago. Not?" and he drew her on to the sofa beside him.

"Yes, if you like," she said, pleased and happy.

"Und vot else I takes to Chigago?" he added, looking deep in her eyes.

"Why, I don't know," said Pony, strangely embarrassed, for *her;* "your trunk, I suppose."

"Ya-as, but vot else besides my tronk? Can I took back to Chigago a promise from mein leedle Pony dat she be so goot vor to marry me von of dose days, und be mein goot little frau, und love her Hermann vot blay some music for her efery tay, und sing her leedle love songs in Yarman ven she couldn't understood it?"

"Why—I declare—I—" gasped Pony.

"Come," he said, placing his arm across the back of the sofa and gently stroking her tumbled Byronic locks, "you can't say you didn't know I love you well, cause mein eyes dey haf told you so long ago. Can you love me, Pony? Will you? Tole me once!"

"Oh, Hermann!" burst out the little girl, putting her tiny hand in his great soft, pink palm; "I think a heap of you."

This would have been as intelligible as Choctaw to Hermann if it had not been accompanied by a look and gesture that would have made Choctaw comprehensible to the weakest intellect.

"Mein sweet little Pony!" he said, drawing her towards him with his strong arm. "My good leedle vild Pony!—Oh—I bin so happy!" and in the excess of his joy, he bent his bright face close to her little dark startled one, and gave her a loving kiss.

"*Mille pardous, amis,*" said Cornelia Cornwallis, who had entered with noise enough, though they had not heard her; and she swept past them in a stately manner.

"Don't prick up your ears and get vicious, Cornelia," cried Pony, running after her and drawing her back. "I've lassoed him, I have; we're going to drive double team hereafter."

Cornelia looked inquiringly at Hermann, who bowed low and said: "Ven you honors us mit your gompany to our vedding, Miss Gornwallis, den ve be very happy."

Cornelia shook hands with them both, and congratulated them; and Hermann, with a look of transcendent joy on his expressive countenance, went to the piano and poured out the Wedding March with a color and a jubilant energy that would have befitted the nuptials of a king.

Pony did not fail to inform Mrs. Nuffer that she was now engaged to be married to the gentleman whom she (Mrs. N.) had so kindly and skillfully entertained for her that afternoon; and that this was an additional reason why her harness should fit snug. Mrs. Nuffer replied that they might both die before they were married, and that in any case they stood little chance of salvation, she feared. Meantime, as these things were cut out, she would go on making them, and being ample big, they could be taken in if necessary.

The good woman, in reality much interested in the fate of this frolicsome girl, who was up to the most unheard-of pranks—trying on dresses wrong side out, putting the left sleeve on the right arm, and things of a similar character—every hour in the

day, worked hard and long. Nine o'clock—ten o'clock in the evening—and still she stitched; the family and guests had gone off pleasuring again. At half-past ten Mrs. Nuffer folded up her work and prepared to go home.

She descended to the lower hall, and as she was about to open the front door, she heard the click of a key in the latch. In another instant Mr. Underhill opened the door and walked in.

Now Mrs. Nuffer had not in the least forgotten certain remarks which had been made by her floor-neighbor, Mrs. Golden, regarding John W. Underhill and his conduct towards an unknown but evidently a suffering woman. Mrs. Nuffer had felt it her duty to speak to him on the subject whenever she found the opportunity. This was the very first she had had, the last she might ever have; so drawing her thin shawl about her shoulders, as an aid to her courage, she looked straight in the rich man's face and said:

"John W. Underhill, do you think you have done your duty towards Helen Wilson?"

John W. Underhill turned fairly blue under the gaslight. His breath came in short gasps.

"Why—what do you know about—Helen Wilson?" he gurgled forth.

Mrs. Nuffer knew in reality nothing about Helen Wilson. All she could say was that she knew a woman who did; and before she left she obtained a promise from John W. Underhill that he would

see this woman and hear what she had to tell him about Helen Wilson.

This was a day and a night of excitements for Mrs. Nuffer. When she arrived home she saw Rosalind Golden running up the stairs alone in front of her. Eleven o'clock at night! What could Rosalind Golden be doing out at night at that hour? On the landing Mrs. Nuffer turned up the gas, which was flickering feebly for the benefit of belated tenants, and then she saw Rosalind with tired, jaded eyes, and some hideous paint but half washed off her face, standing like a culprit under her scrutinizing gaze.

"Why, Rosalind!" exclaimed Mrs. Nuffer, "What on earth is the meaning of this? Where hev you been? What hev you been doing?"

"I've come from the theatre, Mrs. Nuffer," said poor Rosie. "I've been going to tell you every day, that I am on the stage."

"The theatre! On the stage!" cried Mrs. Nuffer in horror; then lifting her hands, she exclaimed, "The Lord have mussy on you, Rosalind Golden, for they are traps to the unwary, and their feet take hold on hell!" And hurrying into her own room, the horrified Mrs. Nuffer locked herself securely in.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MRS. NUFFER ON GUARD.

MRS. NUFFER scarcely slept that night. Rosalind Golden a play-actress! She could hardly believe her senses. Mrs. Nuffer was a staunch believer in the doctrine that the pleasures of this wicked world, however innocent in themselves, are but snares for the sinner's soul.

"I never indulge in the pleasures of this wicked world," said Mrs. Nuffer. "We are not here for our own happiness, but to do what good we can." Having made which remark Mrs. Nuffer would drink her tea with a relish that it did a carnal creature's heart good to see.

But the theatre! Mrs. Nuffer had never been inside a theatre in her life, never read a play, never knew—and of her own knowledge never saw—a player before now. What wild imaginings she had hitherto indulged in regard to the personal appearance of this race she would have found it difficult to explain; if they were naturally endowed with horns, tails, cloven feet and pitchforks, she supposed they managed in some way to conceal these demoniacal appendages while moving about the

streets in the light of day; aided therein by their great parent, Satan, much could be accomplished; but that Rosalind Golden, the girl with the bright smile, the tender daughter, the loving sister, the hard-working household drudge of two rooms and a dark closet in a poor house in a cheap avenue—that *she* should belong to a class whose members, one and all, Mrs. Nuffer supposed rioted in ill-gotten gains, and led lives of loose and insolent merriment, seemed very strange. One thing was plain—souls were to be saved now, if ever, and Mrs. Nuffer resolved at once to set about the task.

Crossing the landing-place she knocked at Rosalind Golden's door. In an instant a head appeared—a little fair, curly, blonde head, set on the body of a strongly-knit though small boy of sixteen; Purdy Golden, the train newsboy, the prettiest little fellow, the most amiable, mischievous, bright, affectionate, tantalizing child that the warm-hearted but lugubrious Mrs. Nuffer had ever known.

Pushing past him without a word Mrs. Nuffer entered the room and shut the door cautiously behind her.

"What's the matter, Mrs. Nuffer?" asked Purdy. "Robbers?"

It was a curious fact that Mrs. Nuffer, who had nothing worth the robbing, was always in desperate fear of robbers.

"Only robbers of the soul, Purdy, only robbers of the soul. Where's your sister?"

"She's in the other room with mother," answered the pretty little fellow. "Mother's not well this morning and Rosie's giving her her breakfast in bed."

"Oh Purdy, my dear child," said the unhappy Mrs. Nuffer, laying her thin hand on Purdy's shoulder, while her dim eyes filled with tears, "only to think that your pore sister should be that wicked thing, a play-actor!"

"If you mean that Rosie is wicked, Mrs. Nuffer," said Purdy stoutly, "you tell an awful story. Yes, ma'am," as Mrs. Nuffer shook her head in evident distress. "But that's not saying that I don't hate the idea of Rosie's being on the stage. I despise the stage, and I'm going to work night and day so as Rosie can stay off of it. Oh, my prospects are very bright, Mrs. Nuffer—I'm doing splendidly. I sold six bound books yesterday, besides a lot o' papers, and my profits were over two dollars. What do you think of that?" he inquired, proudly; "that's promising for the future, ain't it? Yes, ma'am, I'm going to work hard and take Rosie off the stage." Then he added in a confidential tone, "I'm never going to get married, Mrs. Nuffer."

"Seems to me, Purdy," said Mrs. Nuffer, "that you're pretty young to talk of such things."

"Sixteen last June," said Purdy. "Not so very young. I'm small of my age, you see. I wish I was bigger."

"No," said Mrs. Nuffer, "don't wish anything

of the sort. It ain't right. Can a man by taking thought add one cubic to his stature? That's Bible truth, Purdy."

"But it *is* mean to think that all the trouble is right here in the thigh—ain't it, now?" said Purdy.

"What's wrong with your thigh, Purdy—I never noticed anything out o' the way with your thigh."

"Why," said Purdy, striking his breast with his dimpled fists, "my body is as long as a tall boy's; so is my leg from the knee to the ankle; but here's this little short thigh, and that's what makes me —at sixteen—small of my age. I sit quite tall, Mrs. Nuffer," added he, running his fingers through his thick curls, and straightening himself up in his chair like a London horse-guard, or a Christy's minstrel about to sing a pathetic ballad.

"Well, what does it matter? Long thighs and short thighs has all got to appear at the day of judgment together."

"Oh, I'll be a grown man long before that time," said Purdy, confidently. "But the thing that annoys me so much now is that being sixteen —which is pretty old, you know—and yet *small* of my age, I don't know whether to act as if I was a young man or an old boy."

"Well, you're just a boy, I should say," answered Nuffer, rather tartly, "and will be for some years yet."

"Have you ever noticed, Mrs. Nuffer," said he,

leaning over and whispering in her ear, "that I'm getting a mushtache?"

"No," answered she.

"Well, now you just look with your spectacles and you'll see something on my upper lip," he replied, his voice quite trembling with excitement. "I see it every morning in the glass when I comb my hair. I don't say I see a mushtache, Mrs. Nuffer, not a real mushtache, that there's no getting over; but I do say that I see *something*—a kind of a shadow on my upper lip when I turn sideways."

Taking her spectacles out of a small tin coffin and wiping them so long that little Purdy fidgetted under the delay, Mrs. Nuffer at length put on her aids to vision, and grasping Purdy by the ears, turned his face to the light. The boy's heart fluttered during the examination, and sank like lead at the result.

"Can't see a thing," said Mrs. Nuffer, taking off her specs snappishly and burying them again in the tin coffin.

"Well, Mrs. Nuffer, there must be *some* change in me; because it's scarcely more than six months ago that people used to kiss me—everybody did, ladies and men too, and even little girls; and often men and ladies would take me on their knees and smooth my hair and curl it around their fingers; but now, ladies that used to do that, they laugh and say 'He, he, he! why, you're getting to be

quite a *man!'* You're sure the mushtache isn't coming, Mrs. Nuffer?" he again inquired, gravely.

"Sure as that the Bible's gospel truth," said she.

"Well, I shall be glad when I *am* a man, and no mistake," said Purdy. "I shall be superintendent of our road then."

Our road! Purdy had been train-boy on the Hudson River Road for ten days!

"Did I ever tell you about my writing to Horace Greeley for his autograph, Mrs. Nuffer?" asked Purdy.

"No."

"Well, I wrote to him twice. I thought he'd have more respect for me if he supposed it was a man writing, so I sat down and wrote: 'Mr. Greeley—Please favor the undersigned with your autograph. Yours truly, P. Golden.' He didn't take the slightest notice of it. Then Rosie said perhaps he'd give it to me if I told the truth as to who I was. So I sat down again and wrote: 'Mr. Greeley: Will you please give your autograph to a little boy who is trying to make a collection of the autographs of the distinguished men of the age, and greatly oblige Purdy Golden.' I got it the next mail—or at least I suppose it was his autograph—or else he mashed a spider on the paper."

"Purdy," said Rosalind, looking out from the inner room, "it's time for you to go."

Purdy snatched his cap from its peg, and running inside, kissed his mother so loudly, that the noise was heard in the next room; then, after repeating the performance with his sister, he ran to Mrs. Nuffer, and made as if he would kiss her; but instantly darting away, the rogue burst out with, "No you don't, Mrs. Nuffer! You mustn't indulge in the pleasures of this wicked world, you know," and left the room.

Rosalind came and sat down, looking tired and worn. She had been up watching with her invalid mother most of the night, and the bright smile was dimmed. Seating herself by the window, she picked up a stocking and began wearily to darn its gaping rents. Mrs. Nuffer sat motionless opposite her, considering which might be the best way to open fire in the momentous matter.

"Rosalind," said the good woman at length, "if you was my own daughter I couldn't feel wuss about your soul than I do now. Oh, sister, how ken you be so cool and collected when the avenging Lord is nigh?"

Rosalind did not answer; but the knit brow and the mobile lips betrayed the active thought which was going on in the girl's brain.

Mrs. Nuffer would have preferred a retort; she liked to do the Lord's work, but it was difficult to proceed in it when there was neither submission nor defiance.

"Rosalind Golden, you look this morning real

hardened, you pore child! I feel not half strong enough to say to you what I ought. I have a good mind to go and get our minister to come pray for you. Rosalind, do you never read the Bible, nor think of your God?"

Rosalind quietly laid down her work and answered:

"Mrs. Nuffer, I read in my Bible daily, and God is very rarely out of my mind. If He were not there—if I had not an abiding faith in His goodness—I should not be sitting here now, but should be lying dead and cold in that river which rolls on there, a couple of blocks away. My life is a dark and dreary one; toil, drudgery, pain, and humiliation my daily portion; but I believe that God knows my sufferings and will repay me for them."

"Do you suppose God will not punish you for being a play-actress, Rosalind?"

"Do you suppose He will punish you for being a dressmaker, Mrs. Nuffer?"

"Well, I declare!" ejaculated Mrs. Nuffer; "it's no sin to be a dressmaker, that ever I heard!"

"It is no sin to be an honest dressmaker, as you are. It is no sin to be an honest actress, as I am. If you cheat, steal, or lie in your profession of dressmaking, God will punish you. If I commit those sins, or others in my profession of actress, God will punish me. But that He will punish me for doing my duty, I cannot insult my intelligence

by believing. I do not follow the stage because I love it, but because it is a means of livelihood. Let me leave the stage, and who is to put bread in the mouth of my paralyzed mother?" asked Rosalind in an agitated voice, but knowing that her mother was asleep, and could not hear her.

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," said Mrs. Nuffer. "He will provide."

"Yes; He provides for me this path, by walking dutifully in which I can support my mother."

"And what is your lookout for your own future, Rosalind? What is your hope of an eternal life? Are you not afraid to die?"

"In the sense that I am a sinner, yes," said Rosalind; "in the sense that I am an actress, no —no more than if I were a shoe-binder. I love God, fear Him, and try to be a good girl, and this being the case, I believe my chance for salvation as good as if I had gone every Sunday for the last ten years and listened to the Reverend Snooks, who would be horrified if he knew I was an actress, while he pets married ladies of his congregation who come to our theatre once or twice a week, and sit in dark corners of private boxes, and whisper behind their fans with young gallants who feed them bon-bons, and make an exchange of button-hole bouquets with them in their flirting conversations."

Mrs. Nuffer was indescribably horrified at this, but the clock at this moment striking ten, she

arose in great haste. "That little Pony *will* be mad," she said. "But before I go, Rosalind, I must tell your mother that I spoke to John W. Underhill about Helen Wilson."

"Indeed!"

"Yes—and he promised to come here and see your mother at four o'clock this afternoon."

"I will tell mother when she wakes."

"Well, the Lord's blessings on you, child, and may He lead us all in the right path."

"Amen!" said Rosalind.

At four o'clock John W. Underhill came. He found the paralyzed woman alone, Rosalind having retired to the sleeping-room, not caring to hear any details of a story she knew to be a painful one, yet keeping within call, in case her mother should require her services; and for more than an hour, the rich man and the decayed actress raked over the ashes of a dead past.

CHAPTER XXV.

WOMAN AGAINST WOMAN.

In the pretty parlor in the Fifth Avenue Hotel, that looked through its lace curtains on the Park, the woman Marcia sat at a writing-table thoroughly engrossed in the construction of a letter to which she gave an extreme care, not only in respect to its phraseology, but also to its chirography, which she labored to make large and round as that of a man.

With her spectacles laid aside, and her face flushed with excitement, an observer of clear vision might have seen that in her youth this pitted Marcia had been an attractive if not a beautiful woman. That she was intelligent, well-educated, one saw even now—even her employer, Mrs. Duncan, not any too prone to recognize excellence in her servant, saw this; and there were moments when the handsome widow wondered how it was that so accomplished a woman should content herself with a menial situation, scarcely more than that of lady's maid, when she was perfectly qualified to fill that of a teacher, book-keeper, or other person of trust and responsibility.

But positions of this sort Mrs. Duncan knew

were not to be had for the wishing, and she had met with too many vicissitudes herself to be long astonished at anything of this kind.

Marcia wrote on, forming every stroke of every letter with as much care as if she were committing a forgery; her whole being, eyes, ears, heart, mind, seemed absorbed in the work; and like a woman waking from a dream she stood, as—the letter snatched from her hand—she found herself face to face with Mrs. Duncan, whose eyes flashed fire and fury, and whose white lips quivered with rage. "So—you *wretch!*" she hissed out between her closed teeth, "it's you who have been sending Stuart Phelps these anonymous letters, is it? YOU!"

Poor, convicted Marcia! She had thought Mrs. Duncan gone for the day, and that the door was locked. The old story! Murder will out. No help for it now. She was discovered.

"You *vile* creature!" almost screamed Mrs. Duncan, shaking the letter in her face, "I have wondered who on earth this snake-like enemy could be, trying to injure me with the only man I ever loved—"

"The only man you ever loved!" cried the mute Marcia, who had found her tongue at last. "Oh, you wicked woman! Did you not love Richard Duncan fifteen years ago? or did you lie when you swore to him you loved him? After he had lured me from my husband and child, did you

not steal him from me as you are now stealing this young man Phelps from the innocent girl to whom he was engaged to be married? I know you."

"*You* were the woman Richard Duncan was with when I first met him?" inquired Mrs. Duncan in astonishment.

"Yes," answered Marcia, "the same. Oh, you find me greatly changed, no doubt. Time, trouble, remorse, poverty, the small-pox, aided by a pair of spectacles to complete the disguise—why, my own brother—if I had one—would not know me. But I knew you—have never lost sight of you since you took Duncan from me. Now Duncan is dead—he was shot—you didn't tell this young Phelps that. Who shot him?—*was it you?*"

Mrs. Duncan recoiled as this irate woman followed her up step by step with her terrible questionings.

"I shoot him!" she whispered, "of course not. No one ever accused me of such a thing."

"Then it was this man Williams, who is also infatuated with you, and whom you have also told that he is the only man you ever loved."

"No, no. Williams was never accused. Mr. Duncan committed suicide; the coroner said so."

"Yes, I heard that. We know how such things are dealt with in California. No matter. Richard Duncan has answered before his Maker for his sins towards me. My duty in life now is to atone for

my own sins, and to foil your further plans of wickedness."

"Leave this place this instant! Pack your things and go."

"They have been packed some time. I shall go at once, of course. This would be the last place for me to stay and work against your wickedness, now you have discovered me. But I can work at a distance even better than here. Remember that."

In ten minutes she was gone, and each knew that she had in the other as deadly an enemy as ever breathed on earth. Mrs. Duncan was fully an hour quieting her agitation. Then she went downstairs into the grand parlors and looked at the brilliant groups, ladies, gentlemen, and children, who if they had their agitations and excitements certainly did not show any signs of these feelings now—but then no more did Mrs. Duncan. Who in all those vast rooms looked more peaceful, more unruffled, more gracious, more smiling than she? She had amused herself by making another toilet since Marcia's departure, and was now gorgeous in some rich, light silk, an elegant *chez soi* attire, her hair coiled in thick masses about her well-formed head, her fine complexion, a trifle suspicious in its pinkness and its whiteness, admirably softened by the frills of lace which encircled her throat. While she was there Stuart Phelps's card was brought her, and greeting him with cordiality

in the grand corridor she invited him to her private parlor.

Then such a story as this wily tongue had to tell about Marcia! Stuart was horrified.

"Oh yes, dear friend," said the widow, "there's no doubt about it—she was in Buck Williams's employ. The sly creature as good as confessed it. I wonder we never suspected her."

"So do I," said Stuart. "I've often thought it strange that a woman of so superior a sort should have been acting as your servant."

"All part of a plan—a deep-laid plan to persecute and torture me. Did you ever know a creature so persecuted as I?" said she, turning her violet eyes appealingly upon his face.

Stuart certainly thought her very much persecuted—and uncommonly pretty.

Just then a knock at the door was heard. "Come in," cried Mrs. Duncan, and to the amazement of both, John W. Underhill stood on the threshold. He bowed to Mrs. Duncan, and turned his back on Stuart.

"Excuse my coming to your door, madam," he said, "the servant showed me here. My object in calling is to ask you if you would be good enough to allow me to speak with a person in your employ, who is known as Marcia."

"I have discharged the woman, sir," said Mrs. Duncan, coldly. "I found her to be an unworthy person, and I felt myself obliged to dismiss her."

Mr. Underhill's face fell. This was a disappointment indeed ; and a grief also.

"Can you tell me where she can be found ?" he asked.

"No, sir. I take no interest in her whatever, as I know her to be a very wicked person."

Mr. Underhill bit his lip, bowed to the widow and withdrew.

When he returned home he told his family what had happened. He had gone to Mrs. Duncan's on an errand of mercy to see her servant, Marcia—he did not explain to Fay what he wanted of Marcia, and Mrs. Underhill knew without explanation —and there he had seen Stuart Phelps again.

Fay felt as if the events of a few weeks had aged her ten years. She was alone again now. Cornelia and Pony had returned to Philadelphia. The former had rejected Lord de Coram's offer of marriage, and the latter was wild with joy at the prospect of her approaching nuptials with Hermann Kalbfleisch, which had been set for an early date, the eminent jurist, Pony's father, having been unable to find speck or flaw in the honest testimony from all sorts of witnesses in regard to the upright character of the young German.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LITTLE PURDY'S FRIEND.

On a railway train whose locomotive sniffed the air of the East as if it, like the rest of the Western world, felt a new inspiration as it drew nearer and nearer to New York, a man sat in a luxurious palace car, looked contemptuously at the Hudson river, and put his feet up on the velvet cushions of the seat opposite.

He was a through passenger from San Francisco. Day and night for a week he had traveled; three thousand miles without an hour's pause. Well, 'tis an old story now—let's have no raptures of surprise. And yet it is a marvelous tale this man could tell! Only a week ago, he left San Francisco, with its crowds of chattering Chinese, whirled for a few hours through the balmy air of December in California; then amid Arctic snows, belting Sierras, looked down into abysmal valleys glowing with beauty, with shining waterfalls and ribbon-like rivers; and whirling on, gazed with tired eyes out upon a sandy desert, Indians, soldiers' camps, prairie-dogs, in their little sand houses, coyotes trailing their lank limbs through sand, more and more

sand, sage-brush and sand. On and on, through huge drifts of snow, over wide reaches of windy plain, and at last the muddy river on whose bank sits Omaha —the first place that looks like a town, since Sacramento was left behind. Through rich and rolling-prairied Iowa, across bridges, through towns teeming with life—and five hundred miles before arriving at it the wondrous energy of Chicago tinges everything. Chicago merchants advertise—Chicago newspapers flood the trains; what are they doing in Chicago? what is the weather at Chicago? what is the state of trade in Chicago?—these are the current questions which fill the air. Chicago seems the central point of the universe. Other trains connect with this at junctions, all crowded with people bound for Chicago—striving more eagerly to get to Chicago than they are to reach heaven. And here it is at last—not heaven, far from it!—but Chicago.

After this long journey—in which various stages of existence have been passed, from barbarism to civilization—in which men of various hues have been spoken to, Chinese, Indians, negroes, half-breeds, white men, not to mention Mormons,—and animals of various forms have been fired at, buffaloes, coyotes, antelopes, prairie-dogs—and canvas huts on sandy deserts have been the prevailing order of architecture—after an experience like this, Chicago seems the Paragon of the world. Where else are to be found buildings so palatial,

streets so crowded, shops so dazzling, women so elegant, men so thoughtful, and wielding in their hands interests so immense? No, no—New York may be doing very well; sea-ports are generally more or less lively, even in December; London and Paris are thriving because removed from the overshadowing proximity of Chicago enterprise; but Chicago is Chicago—*il n'y a pas à dire!*

This was two days ago; now, after another thousand miles of scudding through thickly populated towns, past the roar of Niagara, which even winter can not hush, the frozen Hudson is reached at last, and the traveler from the Pacific coast looks at it lazily through the large plate-glass window of his palace car, and places his boots on the velvet cushions opposite by way of expressing his contempt for anything so flat.

"Wish to look at any of these nice books, sir?" said Purdy Golden, standing before him with his arms full of literature.

The traveler shook his head.

"All the latest publications, sir," said Purdy in a soft, insinuating voice. "All the new magazines for January—all the weeklies—"

"Got 'em all, eh?" said the traveler, with a hard stare of his wicked black eyes.

"Yes, sir—would you like—"

"Well, look ahere," said the traveler, lifting his forefinger and shaking it with a horizontal motion slowly under poor Purdy's nose; "take

all of 'em away wid you when you go—and go quick—and don't come back a-bodderin' me wid 'em again,—'cause if you do I'll give you such a lickin' your mother won't know you next time she sees you. Now mind!"

With this the San Francisco man turned his back on the astonished Purdy, and looked out of the window again.

The boy turned to other passengers, dropping a book or two by the side of each, as if it were bait, and leaving them to nibble at it apparently undisturbed, as if they were fish. Purdy was a good deal disturbed by the rudeness of the traveler's speech, but he was too good a boy to think of resenting it; and besides, he was in pretty good spirits to-day, for business had been brisk on the up-train, and he already saw himself—on the extensive capital of one dollar and a half which he carried in his private pocket-book, his own percentages on what he had sold thus far—President of the road and its most extensive stockholder; more millions than one in the savings bank where he had already deposited six dollars; Rosalind off the stage, and his mother luxurious in an invalid's chair of an entirely new and unique pattern, which Purdy had lately viewed at the patentee's rooms in Broadway—an ingenious contrivance, a sort of cross between a guillotine and a catapult; it was called the Procrustean, and was warranted to fit everybody—or failing this, to make everybody fit it.

Among the most generous of Purdy's patrons on this eventful day was a young man who interested the train-boy very much. He was muffled in a long overcoat handsomely trimmed with fur, and richly braided with frogs, and which evidently came from the workshop of some European tailor, and he wore a cap of rich fur which looked extremely well against his very light hair. He appeared to be as a youth may be—and a youth only—when some great happiness dwells in his soul, and all the earth, and everything and everybody on it, seem fair and good. It was impossible not to observe him among all the crowd of the car; he was so bright that Purdy noticed the very conductor, a weather-beaten man with a record of thirty years' faithful service on this road, made pretext to stop frequently by his side and say a word—how many minutes they were late, the exact time at present, and so on. The young man's face was so sunny it seemed to warm Purdy's heart just to look on it; and when the train was under full headway, with its covering noise, Purdy in passing heard him give vent to his happiness by trilling snatches of delicious songs of love or valor, in a voice of silvery brightness, true and fluent as a flute.

"Like that book I sold you, sir?" said Purdy to the singer, in one of his passings.

"I don't know if I like it or not," was the reply, in a pleasant voice. "I didn't read it yet. I didn't bought it to read—I bought it vor a present."

"Oh!" said Purdy, lingering by Hermann's side, without any better reason than that he liked him, apparently.

"How much you make selling dose books, eh? You get rich pretty quick? Not?"

"Well, I make about two dollars a day," said Purdy, with the air of one who expects to astonish you by such a large financial statement.

"So?" said Hermann. "Tvelve dollars a veek is very nice wages for a poy like you. Ven I vas your age I vorked for 'bout tvelve dollars a year."

"Well," said Purdy, not quite at his ease on the subject. "I don't mean to say I make two dollars every day; but I made that *one* day; and to-day I've made a dollar and a half. I'll average about five dollars this week, I guess. I'm just beginning."

"Dot's a lot of deeference," said Hermann. "Vy don't you go to Chigago? Dot's de best blace. I 'spect you get rich some time if you go to Chigago. How vould you like to go beck to Chigago mit me ven I go beck?"

"No," said Purdy, "I can't go to Chicago. I've got a sister and a mother in New York to look after."

And he went on gathering up his bait from the seats.

Every time he passed through the car, Purdy stopped and had a chat with Hermann, who presently knew his whole story, and took a strong liking to him.

Soon after passing Sing Sing, Hermann felt himself the recipient of a severe punch in the back—an unprovoked assault which considerably startled him; but that it did not ruffle his temper was evident from the sunny face he turned in the direction from which the punch came, and the amiable tone in which he said to the puncher:

"You poonch your umbrella through mein back-bone—not?"

"Wal, I didn't mean to punch you quite so hard," was the grinning reply, "but wasn't you at Long Branch last summer?"

"Vat den? You stick your umbrella in de back-bones of beeples because dey was at Long Branch?"

"Oh no, I only thought I'd like to talk to you, that's all. You're the man used to play the pyany so scrumptious, ain't you?" And here N. B. Wiggins, to illustrate his meaning, twiddled his fingers in so ludicrous a manner that Kalbfleisch burst out laughing.

"If I vobbles"—this had been a very useful word added to Hermann's somewhat restricted vocabulary since La Pittaluga's *débût*—"if I vobbles my fingers like you do, I not blay very goot, I can tell you."

"Oh well, *I* ain't no pyany player," said Take Notice, uttering a truth which no one would have thought of refuting, "but I did use to like to hear you operate on that old machine at the Branch.

Thunder! how you did make them ivories rattle! You're going to New York, of course?"

"Yas, and den I goes to Philadelphia," said Hermann, swaying his head from side to side with pleasure, as a child hops from foot to foot from the same cause.

"Philadelphy's a nice place," said Wiggins. "Don't you think so?"

"Oh no," answered the truly *Chicagoized* Hermann, "old fogy blace—no beesness dere, but I don't go for beesness, I goes to git married."

"You don't say so! Married! I want to know! One of them Philadelphy ladies you met at the Branch?"

Hermann had no difficulty in describing Pony, whom Wiggins had particularly observed; and congratulations were of course in order.

After a pause Wiggins leaned forward again and said in Hermann's ear:

"Do you see this here man on the other side the car, three seats back of us?"

Hermann looked in the indicated direction and saw the person with his feet on the velvet seat.

"He's a gambler from San Francisco; name's Buck Williams," said Wiggins. "A man in the other car was telling me about him. Say he's a desperate character. Look out for him. Don't let him rope you in. He may try it by proposing a game—seeing you're a furriner he may think you're green. Good-by. I get off here. Have

to see a man on business—go into the city on a later train."

"Good-by," said Hermann, cordially shaking hands with the man from Oshkosh; then drawing a business card from a case which had a picture of the Hohen-baden castle ornamenting one side of it, Hermann placed it in Wiggins's hands and said in his brightest tone, "Come and see me once—Not?"

Wiggins said, "Certainly—certainly;" and then jumped off the train, which barely stopped long enough to take up and let off its passengers. It was a lightning express, behind time and trying to reach New York at the advertised minute.

Hermann was startled out of a comfortable doze into which he had fallen, by a great crash as if heaven and earth were coming together. He was hurled forward as if a giant had taken him for a plaything, and found himself on all fours in the midst of a confused mass of broken beams, uptorn seats and smoking embers. The train had come to a sudden standstill, and the silence of dusk was broken by groans and cries and shrieks of pain. Escaping from the wreck as he best could, Hermann found himself unharmed save by a slight cut upon his forehead, from which he wiped the blood away with his handkerchief, and tying the linen about his head, looked around him. The first object that caught his sight was Mr. Buck Williams from San Francisco, who stood quietly smoking a

cigar, as if that were the most natural thing to do under these particular circumstances.

"Bit of a shake-up," said he laconically, addressing Hermann.

"You're all right,—ain't you?" said a voice that tried to be cheerful through pain, and turning Hermann saw poor little Purdy lying helpless.

"You are hurt—not?" said Hermann running to him.

"I guess my leg's broken," said Purdy.

Hermann stooped instantly, and Purdy clasped his little arms about the young man's neck as confidently as if he had lain on that broad breast since babyhood. Hermann lifted him up and asked him where he lived. In a faint whisper Purdy told him.

"I'll took you home," said Hermann.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MARCIA BEARS WITNESS.

POOR LITTLE PURDY! Where are your grand schemes now? President of the road, millions in the Savings Bank, the invalid's chair, yclept the Procrustean, Rosalind off the stage, a greater length of thigh—all dreams, not soon to be realized.

Rosalind opened the door, and seeing Purdy in

a stranger's arms, his little body wrapped in a great overcoat lined with fur and richly braided, nothing but his dear face visible, his eyes closed, his cap gone, his hair dabbled with dirt and blood, she started back—but she uttered no sound. Her mother shrieked and tried to rise from her chair; being unable to do so, fell back again with a moan. Hermann was too much agitated to be surprised at seeing Mr. Underhill in this humble abode, though at another moment such a circumstance might well have seemed strange to the young German; but Mr. Underhill's visits here were frequent of late, for every day or two he called to see whether Mrs. Golden had had any tidings of Helen Wilson.

"Dere vas a pad accident on de train," said Hermann, carrying Purdy to the sofa and gently laying him down; "I yoost leave him here und run vor a doctor."

In five minutes he was back with a doctor, Mrs. Nuffer following them, weeping and praying. The doctor threw open the thick coat in which Hermann had enveloped the little boy, and examined his bruises.

"There is no great harm done," said the man of science. "His thigh is broken, but at his age it will be readily healed."

Poor old Nuffer cried as if her heart would break. Strange to say, at this vital moment she could offer no word of consolation. She was not absolutely

textless, but the difficulty was that she could call to mind nothing in Holy Writ which related to railroad accidents or fractured thighs. Mastering her emotion, however, she quieted her sobs and grasping at the first idea which crossed her brain, she murmured piously:

"Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."

"Yes, ma'am, thank you," said Purdy, trying to smile in spite of his pain; "this is sufficient for to-day."

"We know not what a day may bring forth," said Mrs. Nuffer, beginning to weep again as she saw the little boy wincing under the surgeon's manipulations.

"Per-haps it'll be my head next," gasped Purdy lugubriously; then in a moment of comparative ease, he cried out, "Don't cry, mother—don't be worried, Rosie. I'll soon be all right again. After all, Mrs. Nuffer," said he, with a twinkle of fun in his pretty eyes, "it's only my thigh. I never cared much for my thighs, you know."

Hermann now excused himself, but promised to call again later in the evening. It is needless to say how heartily he was thanked by all for his kindness to poor Purdy, nor how modestly he disclaimed any credit for what he had done. But Purdy, in spite of physical anguish, which was rather increasing than subsiding, clung to the young German's hand and absolutely kissed it in the excess of his gratitude.

"I tell you what it is," said the little fellow with tears in his eyes which emotion had called forth, though pain had failed to do so; "you're a trump. Mr. Kalbfleisch"—and then with the inherent mischief of his age and nature he added with a droll imitation of Hermann's voice, "'Not!'"

Hermann smiled and again said good-by. The door had barely closed behind him, when it opened again and Marcia—the spectacled, the pitted Marcia—quietly walked in and took off her bonnet and shawl. Mr. Underhill started forward the instant he saw her. He recognized her, of course, as Mrs. Duncan's servant whom he had seen at Long Branch. And day by day he had met her there, face to face, on the piazza, cheek by jowl on the beach, in the hallways, summer-houses, and wherever her service to her mistress called her, and never once had he suspected that she was other than she seemed—the docile and well-trained attendant of a bogus fine lady.

Before Mr. Underhill could speak to her, Marcia was speaking to Mrs. Golden.

"I've come to take care of Purdy, Mrs. Golden," said she; "you can't, and Rosalind can't. I've come to take care of this little boy," and she laid her hand softly on his curly head.

"Oh, I'm glad," cried Purdy; "you'll cure me, I know. I remember you nursed me and Rosalind when we had the measles, and cured us up in no time."

"I'm glad you've come," said Mrs. Golden. "We've been wanting to see you this long time. Where have you been since you left Mrs. Duncan?"

"I took service with a family out of town," said Marcia; "I was in the city to-day and came to see you. A woman in the shop below told me of this accident. Now I shall stay with you till Purdy gets well."

Mr. Underhill stepped forward and held out his hand.

"Sister Helen!" he said.

"John!"

Mr. Underhill made a movement as though he would embrace his sister, but she shrank from him with a frightened air, and turned away her head.

"Don't turn away from me, Helen. I am glad I have found you at last, and I want you to come home with me."

"Home with you?" she repeated, as if doubting that she heard aright.

"Yes—I want you to come home with me; that is the place for you. I will see that Mrs. Golden has everything that she needs."

"Did you know, John, that this good woman took care of me when I had the small-pox and no one else would come near me?"

"Yes," said Mr. Underhill, "and she wrote me to come and help you in your hour of remorse and suffering; but I would not—my heart was hard and unforgiving."

"No matter now—but my duty is to stay by this good friend of mine here," answered the woman whom we have known as Marcia.

"But your daughter—our darling Fay—do you not wish to see her?" this in a low tone to her; and their conversation from this out no one heard but themselves.

"John, I have always resolved that if I could prevent it, Fay should never know that I was her mother. I have forfeited my claim to that title a thousand times over by my wicked act of sixteen years ago. This is my punishment. I deserve this and more—though there can scarcely be a greater suffering on earth than for a mother who dearly loves her child to live near that child and feel that she is a creature of no importance to the offspring in whom at one happy period her very life was bound up. If the mother of a wicked and perverse child can feel this, how much more then do I who was blessed with so sweet and noble a child as Fay—your Fay—your daughter now, for you have been more than a father to her, God bless you for it."

"Fay is a good girl, Helen,—a dear, good child; she has always supposed that she was our daughter, but if you will come home with me now we will tell her the truth. She will bear the news bravely, I know, and treat you with all the love and respect which is due a mother," answered Fay's good guardian.

"She need never learn it, John. Why should she? No—spare her this. I will love her at a distance. I always have. She has already a grief in her young heart, and one which I will try to dispel. This young man to whom she was engaged, Stuart Phelps—"

"The scoundrel!" muttered Underhill.

"No; he has done nothing as yet to forfeit your esteem or Fay's love. But he is in deadly peril—our angel Fay must save him."

"Is he worth it?" asked Underhill, contemptuously.

"Yes; it is a Christian duty to wrest him from the toils of the woman who is now seeking to drag him down to her own level—and besides, John, Fay loves him, and is grieving at his loss."

"Do you think so?" said the uncle-father, anxiously; but still sadly perplexed.

Step by step Marcia (or Helen) recounted to her brother the story of the California widow's life as she knew it—only too well, alas! How when scarcely more than a child, but already old in wickedness, she had fascinated the sinful man who had been the downfall of innocent Fay's guilty mother, and induced him to marry her and leave the wretched Helen penniless, friendless, and tossing on a sick bed alone in the great city—where she might have died from neglect had it not been for the kindness of the poor actress in whose rooms they were now sitting. How this

Mrs. Duncan had led a tempestuous life in California for some years; her husband's violent death by shooting—many believing his wife to be the assassin—the mad infatuation for her of the well-known gambler, Buck Williams, which was generally believed to have been the true cause of Mr. Duncan's death, whether he died by his own hand or not; and finally her quarrel with Williams and return to New York, where under the name of Marcia, Helen Wilson sought service with her, impressed with the firm belief that here was her allotted field of duty.

"And fate has made my post no vain one, John," she said, with enthusiasm. "I have kept a sleepless watch over Stuart Phelps—Fay's betrothed—and I know well the influences which have made him refuse to drop Mrs. Duncan's acquaintance."

"But is he not guilty at least in so much as this—that he permitted Mrs. Duncan to fancy he loved her, and would marry her perhaps?"

"No, no, you are mistaken. He has been obstinate, proud, but in no respect guilty. Can you doubt me, John?" she said, laying her hand on her brother's arm. "Would I let *my daughter* marry a man if I supposed him guilty in the slightest degree with this woman—this woman of all others, who caused poor Fay's mother so much suffering?"

Soon after this Mr. Underhill rose to go.

"Sister," he said, "these good people must lack for nothing."

Marcia accepted without hesitation a roll of bills to be used in their service.

The next day when John W. Underhill went home to dinner at evening, he was accompanied by a friend.

"Tell Miss Fay I wish to see her here in the drawing-room—you need not say any one is with me," said Mr. Underhill to the grinning Jo—now grinning harder than ever, for cause.

Fay ran down lightly to greet her father and kissed him fondly as he held open his arms. She saw no one but him; but the parlors were somewhat dark at that hour.

"Did you want me, papa dear?"

"Yes, daughter; there is a person coming to dine with me to-day to whom I wish you to be very kind; a person whom I have wronged, I honestly believe, and therefore I want my darling girl to be all the kinder to him on that account. You will do this, will you not, darling, for papa's sake?"

Believing it to be some one who had been concerned in a business dispute, Fay answered with her pretty smile,

"Oh, certainly, dear papa; I'll go so far as to kiss the old fellow if you like."

"The old fellow takes you at your word, Fay," said a familiar voice, and a familiar face emerged from the shadow.

Fay gave a little shriek.

"Stuart!" she cried.

"Yes," he answered, "Stuart, that abominable pig-headed scamp who nearly ruined his happiness for life by blind obstinacy and wicked pride."

"No—you were not wicked," she cried, her dear eyes brimming with tears, and eagerly defending Stuart against himself. "He was not really wicked, was he, papa?"

"I erase wickedness from the account," quoth Mr. Underhill, "but the pig-headedness will have to stand."

"The old fellow is waiting for that kiss, Fay," pleaded Stuart.

"And the old fellow shall have it," said she, kissing her father again and again. "And well he deserves it, too," she whispered in his ear, "for being so good to his little girl."

"I have my case yet to plead, Fay," said Stuart. "And I am ready to make a clean breast of everything as soon as you are ready to hear and pardon me."

"Stuart," said Fay, very gravely, and casting down her truthful eyes; "papa has brought you back to me, and what papa does I know must be right. As for pardoning you, I pardon you without a hearing—and I never want to know another word about it. We are united again now—and I hope we shall never be separated so long as we both shall live."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PONY WINDS UP THE STORY.

DURING the year and a half which followed these events many changes occurred to the personages who have figured in our story. Purdy Golden recovered the use of his leg, but, much to his astonishment and regret, he found that one of his thighs was even shorter than it was before the accident, and shorter, too, than the other thigh—so that he limps a little. Rosalind Golden made a great hit in a part at last, and was the rage of the hour on the New York stage for a time. How she was beloved by her fellow-actor, Mortimer Perrin, whom ladies of fashion were assailing with love-letters by the score, and what she did with his love and other loves which were laid at her feet, may be told in another history—there is no room for it here. Mrs. Nuffer is also mixed up curiously in that untold history, and bides her time to reappear. Marcia lives with the Goldens still, and is a great help and comfort to them all. There are times, however, when she breaks away from the home of her friends, and goes and stands in front of Mr. Underhill's house—hungering and thirsting

for a look in the soft eyes of her quite unconscious daughter, who, happy in the possession of parents whom she believes to be the best a girl ever had, has more than once shuddered as she caught a passing glimpse of the pitted creature whom she recognized as the woman who was the servant of her husband's temptress, the dreadful Mrs. Duncan. And seeing her repugnance written on the face of her daughter—that daughter for whose love she would gladly give an empire, if she had it—the wretched Helen Wilson has stolen away to weep in silence, murmuring, "It is the just punishment of my sin. I will bear it patiently. It is my atonement. Darling Fay, you will know me in Heaven."

As for Mrs. Duncan, simultaneously with the arrival in New York of Mr. Buck Williams, she disappeared as completely from the sight of the people she had so disturbed as if she had vanished into air. Stuart and his wife Fay might never have heard of her again had it not been for the correspondence of Pony Kalbfleisch, who, from Chicago, wrote them—about once or twice a year—accurate news of what was going on in every quarter of the globe; but her principal theme, after all, was that of every mother:

"My baby! Oh, Fay! you just ought to see my baby! He weighs twenty-two pounds! Now only fancy me struggling with twenty-two pounds! He pulls harder than any horse I ever drove. But

I don't struggle—I just let him take the whip hand. Fay, I don't want to be vain—I do despise these ridiculous mothers who, because they've got a baby, are as puffed up as if theirs was the only baby ever seen, and go around declaring that their baby is the prettiest, and the smartest, and the cunningest baby that ever was born into the world; I *know* my baby is all this, and on top of it I will add that he is the pinkest, and the blondest, and the Dutchest baby that ever saw the light of day in Chicago—and that is saying a great deal. He laughs and crows all the time; his father comes in after he's got through business for the day, and takes him in his arms, and they converse together voluminously in their language for quite a time, and I sit by till I get tired, and then I say: 'Hermann, you'd better give me the baby; I'm afraid so much German will sour on his stomach.' And then Hermann laughs, and goes to the piano and plays, and the baby sits in my lap and grunts, and says 'Goot,' or something that sounds very much like it, I can tell you. And—will you believe it, Fay?—that baby can play the piano himself. True as you live! Sometimes, when I take him to the piano, he just yells with joy (Hermann has got his yell-note, and says it's b above the lines), and he jams his fists and feet on to that old keyboard as if he were going for Beethoven before he got his first tooth.

"What do you suppose we've christened our

baby? Now if you laugh I'll never speak to you again. Write me if you laughed so I can never speak to you again. His name is Louderbeck Staffelhausen Kalbfleisch. Did you ever? I never did. It was the name of Hermann's uncle who lent him money enough to come to America, and Hermann is eternally grateful. I said to him 'Why, good gracious, Hermann, your uncle lent you thirty dollars to pay your passage in the steerage, which you've repaid a dozen times over—that's no reason why you should borrow his jaw-breaking name for our baby to carry around the world till he grows humpbacked under it.' But Hermann would have his way in this though he generally gives in to me. Gracious, Fay, how I did wrestle with that name! I had to have it written out in a large handwriting and then retire to privacy for two hours a day to study it. I had to walk up and down and beat my breast just as we used when we studied hard lessons at school. I had an imaginary man as a catechiser, who was supposed to say to me, (whenever I thought I'd surely got it now) 'Madam, what is the name of this child?' To which I answered, 'Sir, the name of this child is Louderhausen Stauffelbecker Kalbfleisch.' And then I knew I'd got it wrong, and he'd sent me down to the foot of the class. But I mastered it at last, though I sometimes stumble over it, even now. It is the awfulest name to pet a baby with I ever heard. I generally say 'Lou-

der, darling,' but that seems absurd, for he is quite loud enough as a rule. *I* wanted him called something dashing and off-hand, original yet easy to pronounce. I proposed to Hermann 'Phœbus Bucephalus Pony Parsons Kalbfleisch;' but Hermann wants to know how either he or his Dutch baby or any of his 'Yarman' relations would have pronounced that; and it would have been difficult, I know, because as it is, Hermann half the time calls me Bony, which considering that I'm as fat as butter now, is too ridiculous for anything.

"Fay, what shall I say to you about Hermann? Do you know that that man is every day, every hour, every minute so blessed good—so un-mortal-like good—that sometimes I have to run pins into him to assure myself he is not an angel. When he jumps and squeals and laughs and says 'Now you joost shtop dot, mein Bony—Not?' then I know he isn't and I feel relieved. In all the year and a half we've been married I've never seen him angry for an instant; never impatient; never ruffled. He gets up in the morning and sings the jolliest songs about 'Mein frau, mein frau, ja, ja, ha, ha!' and he kisses me and he kisses the baby, and Louderbeck answers promptly in Dutch and such a time as we do have! At night when he comes home it's just the same. And every Sunday he goes to church and sits back in his pew with that heavenly smile on his face as if angels were talking to him instead of the minister. And scarcely a

day passes but what he's doing some charitable action; now it's money for some sick child, and now it's clothing for some ill-clad man, and now it's a remarkably clean, fat porker, with his insides nicely scooped out of him, trotting off to some hungry widow, to whom gratitude, goodness, Hermann and hog are thereafter synonymous terms.

"So Cornelia Cornwallis has gone to Europe again? We heard it in the strangest way. Hans Schmidt (our uncle if you please, a gentleman who has just emigrated here from somewhere back of Coblentz) stopped a day with us in Chicago on his way out to Minnesota, where he expects to get a farm as big as Germany for two dollars and a half; he went in New York to see Frau Barham—just as he was, lead-rimmed spectacles, blue cotton coat, wooden shoes and green umbrella. While he was there who should walk in but Cornelia! We recognized her at once by his description—elegant girl, etc. Frau Barham almost fainted; and sly old Schmidt took in the situation at once and stayed on and on and talked with Cornelia (who you know speaks German nicely) and told her he was Barham's uncle, and that he expected to get the farm for $2.50, and how he came over in the steerage but brought his own provisions and so got on very well. Well, you can imagine Barham under all this!—but that blessed swell of a Cornelia treated the old chap with the most perfect

consideration, told him she was going to Europe soon, and just behaved—as I've always said about Cornelia—like a regular chip of the Vere de Vere block.

"I saw by a London paper Hermann brought home the other day that Lord de Coram had gone to Egypt. I hope he took his leg. What would that youth sit on, Fay, if he hadn't his leg?

"Did you notice that lumberman from Oshkosh who was at Long Branch when I first met Hermann? ('Met by chance?'—yes, dear, I remember that. Hermann often sings it to me. It's his only English song, and you'd die to hear him sing 'Ve met py shance, de yisshell vay.') I don't suppose you remember the lumberman, as you've never seen him since; but his name was Wiggins, and he is a real jolly soul. He comes to see us frequently and has loaded our little Louderbeck (whom he calls 'Bub') with presents. He was sweet on Pittaluga for a while, till he found she had a husband. La Pittaluga was here and sang to fine houses. We were up in Milwaukee visiting some beer kegs (our uncles and cousins) during the most of her engagement. One night we were here and might have gone, but Louderbeck gave a concert that evening in consequence of a bump on the forehead, caused by trying to do three things at once, to wit: rocking the rocking-chair, steadying himself on the rocking-chair, and trying to discover whether the rocker of the rock-

ing-chair was something good to eat. I let Hermann run over to hear an act of the *Trovatore*, and he returned in a few minutes, saying 'Dat Bito'lucca vobble as much as efer.' The mean critic of the *Sunday Grimes* after she was gone contemptuously said that 'Pittaluga was no great shakes,' but we say that, at least, is false; for she shakes like the ague on the long notes.

"And now comes the tragic part of my letter, Fay dear. Would you believe it, that beautiful California widow who was at Long Branch when we were there together, was shot dead in the street here this morning by the man who was her lover—a notorious gambler named Buck Williams. We have seen her frequently in the streets since we've been married; but so changed you would have had difficulty in recognizing the gorgeous creature of so short a time ago. The story is that she was going off with some other man and deserting Williams. The latter met her in the street, and asked her if she intended to persist in this; she said 'yes,' and turned away, when he pulled forth his pistol and shot her dead. The man wretch escaped while the woman died upon the pavement in the street where she fell.

"P. S. Please let me know if you don't get this letter. The reason I ask is because there is a struggle going on between me and Louderbeck Staffelhausen Kalbfleisch in regard to its possession. He wants to post it in his stomach; I favor

the lamp-box as a more convenient receptacle. We are still at variance about this as I close.

"P. S. No. 2. Just a word, to say that this story of Mrs. Duncan teaches us the old, old lesson, don't it?—that vice is never triumphant for long, and virtue——there! Louderbeck Staffelhausen has torn a piece off and is now chewing it with a sea-sick expression which I attribute to a large ink-blot—no matter. Excuse brevity. I'll write a longer letter next time.

"And am now as always,

"Your affectionate

"PONY."

THE END.

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